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MYTH (UN)MAKING:
THE ADOLESCENT FEMALE BODY IN MYTHOPOEIC YA
FANTASY

by

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degree of
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	3
ABBREVIATIONS	4
REFERENCING POLICY	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	6
DECLARATION	8
ABSTRACT	9
INTRODUCTION Excesses of Expectation: Female Adolescence, 1980–Present	10
CHAPTER ONE Young Adult Literature: The Literature and Its Adolescent	30
CHAPTER TWO Mythopoeic YA Fantasy: From Knights in Shining Armour to a Cyborgian Cinderella	64
CHAPTER THREE Appearances May Be Deceiving	124
CHAPTER FOUR Speaking the Unspeakable and Breaking Cultures of Silence	171
CONCLUSIONS Alternative Ways Through Embodied Subjectivities	221
BIBLIOGRAPHY	240

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 2.1—Pretextual map of Tortall (Pierce 1983)

Figure 2.2—“Revised” map of the Kingdom of Tortall (Pierce 1992)

ABBREVIATIONS

FanFic – fan fiction

NCTE – National Council for Teachers of English

YA – young adult

YAL – young adult literature

YALSA – Young Adult Library Services Association

REFERENCING POLICY

Generally, this thesis follows the Chicago Author-Date method of referencing. Of special note:

A series' title is "capitalized headline-style, but it is neither italicized nor put in quotation marks or parentheses," per the CMS guidelines. For example, *Twilight* (Meyer 2012) is italicised, as the title of the first book of the Twilight Saga (Meyer 2005–2008), whereas the later, as title of the whole series, is not.

Double quotation marks enclose quotes and quotes within quotes are indicated by single quotation marks, per the CMS guidelines.

Many of the texts discussed have seen multiple publications and, in some cases, translations. Where crucial to my argument, I indicate the original publication date in square brackets followed by the date specific to the copy I have referenced.

In an effort to avoid excessive citation, I give full citations for Pierce and Meyer's work in the first instance of usage. In subsequent citations, I use the briefest, clear citation. In many cases, this means the year of publication and a page number, as the text makes clear the author. For reference,

The Song of the Lioness (1983–1988)

Alanna the First Adventure (1983)

In the Hand of the Goddess (1984)

The Woman Who Rides Like a Man (1986)

Lioness Rampant (1988)

The Immortals (1992–1996)

Wild Magic (1992)

Wolf-Speaker (1994)

The Emperor Mage (1995)

The Realms of the Gods (1996)

The Protector of the Small (1999–2002)

First Test (1999)

Page (2000)

Squire (2001)

Lady Knight (2002)

Daughter of the Lioness (2003–2004)

Trickster's Choice (2003)

Trickster's Queen (2004)

Beka Cooper (2006–2011)

Terrier (2006)

Bloodhound (2009)

Mastiff (2011)

Tortall and Other Lands (2011)

The Lunar Chronicles (2012–2015)

Cinder (2012)

Scarlet (2013)

Cress (2014)

Fairest (2015)

Winter (2015)

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Across these acknowledgements, there is a theme of journeys and of journeying, fitting for a thesis concerning the “hero journey.” Appropriately, the people (and kittens) that follow stand out as bastions of light along the, sometimes dark, path.

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Sherah, I still wonder at our meeting. It was one of the best things that came of those early months. Here’s to many, many more Thanksgivings and to, perhaps, one day properly needing a “kids table.”

Mum, Dad and Jess. You’ve each played a more pivotal role in this than you’ll probably ever know. Thank you: mum for instilling a love of reading all those years ago and for marathon Skype sessions (even if we can never remember a

word of what was said); dad for your practical solutions (double monitors and external hard drives) and for Thesis Writing September; Jess for “talking in out” and for always asking the best questions!

Chris, Millie, Mary, Laura, and Lara, for camaraderie in the face of adversity, thank you.

National Rail, particularly the Cross Country service between Nottingham and Birmingham New Street. You, mostly, got me to Coventry “on time,” although via some parts of the country that I’d never envisioned visiting. I’m not sure about the rest of Derby, but the train station’s alright.

Feel Good Fitness in Grantham, my body—and thus my very self, despite this thesis contesting the notion—thanks you.

A long time ago—and yet perhaps it wasn’t so long ago—a very dear friend introduced me to a certain path through the woods, and while, as any good Red Riding Hood would, I stopped often along the way (for flowers, frogs, and a prince), I’ve finally made it to Grandma’s house, and it turns out, I belonged here all along. Denis (and Dana), thank you. You both mean the world to me.

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Ollie, I’m finished now.

DECLARATION

This thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English and Comparative Literary Studies. It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

Parts of Chapter Two and the Conclusions appear in Phillips (2015), and Phillips (forthcoming 2016) includes some of the arguments of Chapter One and Two, while also developing those readings in ways outside of the scope of this thesis.

ABSTRACT

Through a reading of the heroic, female bodies available in Tamora Pierce's Tortall books (1983–2011) and Marissa Meyer's Lunar Chronicles (2012–2015), this thesis demonstrates how mythopoeic YA fantasy contests the dominant, hegemonic narratives of female adolescence. Owing to the system of binary oppositions structuring this space, the adolescent girl is offered—through the heavily stylised and always-edited images of popular and media culture—a very narrow and limited means of becoming self, one insisting on a discourse of self-through-appearance at the expense of the body's fleshiness. Demonstrating a creationary or world-building mind-set, this vein of speculative fiction offers a sub or counter-cultural space in which alternative frameworks of living and being an adolescent female body are possible.

Through the sometimes-fantastical transformations of the body in Pierce and Meyer's fantasy, this thesis engages liminality, focusing on the adolescent (between child/adult), the body (between self/other), and young adult literature (YAL) (between children's/adult literature). Drawing from a variety of fields: YAL and feminist theory, studies of myth and folklore as well as popular culture and cultural anthropology, this thesis speaks to and from the places between oppositions, and does so in order to refuse the individuality and isolation required by hegemonic models, while also offering a re-mapping of the body's curves and contours, one that takes "lumps," "bumps," and "scars" into account. To counter the dominant framework of adolescence, this thesis concludes by offering, through a metaphor of "the Pack," a model of interdependency and relation. Formed by repetition and connection, this model frustrates the economy of opposition, while also taking into account the body's raised and irregular surfaces and demonstrating how individuals may be "scored into uniqueness" through relationality.

INTRODUCTION

EXCESSES OF EXPECTATION: FEMALE ADOLESCENCE, 1980–PRESENT

The journey of adolescence and the hero's journey are essentially the same: both privilege a white, youthful, able-bodied, male figure and both aim, through a linear framework, to maintain heteronormative values and ideals, while also reinforcing patriarchy. The adolescent becomes a stable, heterosexual adult; the hero wins the princess's hand in marriage. In other words, these two journeys chart the same hegemonic story, in particular manifestations. The hero is the adolescent; the adolescent is the hero. Moreover, their shared fantasy of achieving a stable, secure, and, by default, heterosexual (adult) identity is only ever that, a fantasy. It is the ideal, and ideals are not expressions of things as they are but, rather, conceptions of things as they are desired to be—by, in this case, hegemonic, patriarchal discourse. Furthermore, within both these frames, the body marks the adolescent/hero as adolescent/hero. The adolescent is adolescent because of pubertal bodily changes, and the hero is hero because of his bodily strength and potency, characteristics also associated with the ideal adolescent body. Yet, this ideal—expressed by both discourses—also refuses the body.

Dependent on an infrastructure of binary oppositions (mind/body, male/female, linear/cycle), the ideal refuses bodily fleshiness and materiality, in favour of a discursive construction of ability, stability, wholeness, and singularity. These oppositions are not equal in weight; one side of the oppositional pair is superior to the other,¹ and this superiority depends on a clearly defined blank space between the pairs. Paradigmatically, the body is refused because it is not mind, the superior position. This refusal of the body is key because it is through the adolescent girl's alignment with the body (fleshiness and materiality) that she is not only excluded from the paradigm "hero," but also trapped within a developmental scheme that requires the

¹ Derrida (1981) suggests, this opposition is not "the peaceful coexistence of a *vis-à-vis*, but rather [...] a violent hierarchy" (41).

suppression of her body, a body that is shape-changing into “woman” thus offering a heightened fleshiness.²

It is, however, my contention that mythopoeic Young Adult (YA) fantasy literature, a literature particularly concerned with hailing and interpellating an adolescent audience (Althusser 1971), is challenging these dominant, hegemonic discourses of the body and of its appearance, and while such challenging occurs in many ways and in many books, this thesis explores the mythopoeic YA fantasy of Tamora Pierce and Marissa Meyer.³ Pierce’s Tortall Universe and Meyer’s Lunar Chronicles offer bodies of instability, directly countering the images of stability and perfection dominating hegemonic discourse. The cross-dressing, “glamoured,”⁴ menstruating, shape-shifting and cybernetic bodies available in these texts offer alternatives to both the hegemonic discourses of the mythic tradition (ideal heroic form) as well as the visuality of popular and media culture, a space influenced by the discourses of myth and also the one most directly affecting contemporary adolescent girls.

Within this frame, girlhood—particularly its liminal adolescent years—is fraught with great anxiety, increasingly in terms of appearance (Brumberg 1998; Dyhouse 2013). Since the Spice Girls’ popularizing of “Girl Power” in the early 1990s, this focus on appearance has been negotiated through a neoliberal

² I see a subtle difference between female adolescent and adolescent girl. While it is a difficult distinction to make and maintain, I associate the first with the physical changes—the bodily transformations—that demarcate a period between childhood and adulthood and the second with the discursively constructed creature, thus it is a difference along the lines of sex and gender. Yet, herein lies the problem: not only are those physical (i.e. biological, natural) changes capricious, but their meanings (our conceptions of them) are just as culturally constructed as this idea of “adolescent girl” that I attempt to isolate through the division.

³ I focus specifically on Pierce’s *Song of the Lioness* (1983–1988), *Immortals* (1992–1996) and *Protector of the Small* (1999–2002) quartets as well as, to a lesser extent, her *Daughter of the Lioness* duology (2003–2004) and *Beka Cooper* trilogy (2006–2011), as all are also set within the Tortall realm. Meyer’s work comprises *The Lunar Chronicles* (2012–2015).

⁴ This refers to the Lunar glamour, an ability possessed by certain characters in Marissa Meyer’s *The Lunar Chronicles*.

narrative of choice: the adolescent girl *may* choose to be whomever she wishes.⁵ Yet, while such narratives appear to offer agency, the sheer homogeneity of the appearance produced—and that appearance is, itself, so singularly relied upon—suggests a narrowing, rather than an increasing, of options available to the adolescent girl. Furthermore, these narratives posit the female adolescent’s developing body as both her source of power and as something she must (self-) control (Bartky 1988; Gill 2007). Thus, despite gaining access to an unprecedented amount of choice, the adolescent girl remains both trapped within a body and constrained by surveillance and discipline so pervasive that she “freely” chooses to enact their mechanisms of control (bikini waxes and breast augmentation, hair dye and teeth whitening) upon herself, that is to say, upon her body.

Popular and media culture is a discursive space emanating from the West, particularly the United States and its culture of celebrity. Yet, it is also the digital and visual space of social media—Facebook and Twitter, YouTube and Vine, Snapchat and Instagram—where adolescent girls are increasingly “living” more and more of their lives. This is, in other words, the media and image saturated world within which the adolescent girl has existed since the profusion of Internet technologies in the mid-2000s, a saturation that has only increased as technologies have developed (Senft 2008; Rettberg 2014). Through the images of this space as they are made available by popular and social media (the celebrity and the selfie), the adolescent girl is continually presented with images of the ideal body—images that not only model and define the ideal self but that, at times, replace it.⁶ These images of perfection continuously bombard

⁵ In terms of texts examining Girl Power, see: Harris (2004), Currie, Kelly and Pomerantz (2009), and Hains (2012). While neoliberal narratives of choice (among other issues) are explored by: Gill (2007), Gill and Scharff (2011), Stuart and Donaghue (2011). Gonick, Renold, Ringrose and Weems (2009) unites the two narratives, demonstrating how *both* produce the “girl” through a complex web of neoliberal policies and practices.

⁶ Rosalind Gill’s recent work has turned to consider, what she terms, a “psychic” emphasis on what were “body” projects, that is to say, these projects have shifted to a focus on one’s “state of mind.” While Gill reads this as a shift in focus “*from* bodily regulation *to* psychic regulation” (Gill and Elias 2014, 179, my emphasis), I see it as an intensification in the relationship between the body

her: in the pages of her favourite magazines, on the many screens she views, and, even, in the stories she reads. Encompassing both the image (as in photograph) as well as the more illusive self-image (conceptions of oneself, both presented and perceived and reliant on the first notion of image), this insistence on image elides the shape-changes that occur when one is becoming “woman.” The often messy transition—growing breasts, first periods and spotty faces—is elided, in favour of the perfect image, an image that conceals its own constructedness. In other words, the dominance of the visual within this discursive space posits a representational economy that equates her self with her body, and it assumes the “fit” and able body as its ideal.⁷ Moreover through digital technologies, this ideal has the potential to influence multiple geographically isolated and culturally unique spaces (Jenkins 2006), eroding another kind of difference. In this sense, this thesis is placeless, or, rather, it is of the cultural space that now exists because of, and through, digital technologies. If a locating must occur, it hovers somewhere over the Atlantic in terms of its scope and focus, as I see dominant, hegemonic discourses of female adolescence emanating from the Western powerhouses of the United States and Great Britain. It is this discursive space that this introduction reads and that the remainder of this thesis contests through the mythopoeic YA fantasy of Tamora Pierce and Marissa Meyer.

In order to do this, I bring together distinct histories and discourses, focusing on where, and how, they overlap in concern with the adolescent girl, the body—or both. The histories I engage are complex and lengthy, and a full and complete reading of each is outside of the scope of this thesis. Rather, I am interested in the faultiness and fractures where those issues of being adolescent, female and embodied come into sharper focus, treating texts—

and self—in contemporary culture the body is one’s self, especially one’s female self—that speaks to the insidious and pervasive nature of these hegemonic images of perfection.

⁷ Hyde ([1998] 2008) suggests “the organized body is a sign that we are organized psychologically and that we understand and accept the organization of the world around us” (169). This, as paradigm, is fundamental to the hegemonic economy of self-through-appearance with which I am here concerned.

novels, images, tweets, television programmes and films—as cultural artefacts speaking to the perceived shape of female adolescence at a given time. Pierce and Meyer’s mythopoeic YA fantasy texts serve as an anchor because of their engagement with the adolescent female and because of how that engagement offers images of the body that do not construe it as a thing that the adolescent girl must be beholden to or limited by—specifically through narrations of cross-dressing, the Lunar “glamour,”⁸ menstruation, shape-shifting, and being cyborg. These books allow for the acceptability of a changing adolescent female body, rather than the fixed, “perfect” one required by popular and media culture.

While I focus on Pierce and Meyer, they are not the only authors working within this vein of mythopoeic YA fantasy. They are also not the only female authors engaging this reconfiguring of the heroic body in terms of the female. Mythopoeic YA fantasy is a thriving vein of speculative fiction, one that has existed since the early 1980s, when Pierce, but also Robin McKinley, began writing. Of this early work, *The Blue Sword* (McKinley 1982) and its prequel *The Hero and the Crown* (McKinley 1984) are excellent examples. More recent offerings include, but are not limited to, the series, *The Books of Pellinor* (Croggon 2004–2008),⁹ *Graceling Realm* (Cashore 2009–2012), *Throne of Glass* (Maas 2012–on-going), *Seraphina* (Hartman 2013–2015), and *The Queen of the Tearling* (Johansen 2014–on-going). While many of these works construct a pseudo-medieval world, there are examples—of which *The Lunar Chronicles* is one—that consider non-Western locations: the duology comprising *Eon* (Goodman 2008) and *Eona* (Goodman 2011), the *Grisha* trilogy (Bardugo 2012–2014), and *Rebel of the Sands* (Hamilton 2015) are excellent examples.

In the readings that follow, the body is both an essential marker of a sexed and gendered self as well as immaterial to either position. It is a source of truth as well as a site of misprision. It is privileged in conceptions of the self, and it is discounted in favour of discursive productions. The body is, in other words, difficult, if not impossible, to define—at least in terms of binaries. This is

⁸ This is “the illusion of themselves” that gifted Lunars “project into the minds of others, (Meyer 2012, 172).

⁹ The *Books of Pellinor* were first published in Australia beginning in 2002. In references, I give the UK titles and publication dates.

because the body is “a boundary crosser” (Hyde [1998] 2008, 7). It is present, at every turn, delineating a line between, for example, outside/inside, self/other, man/woman, and human/animal, but it does not just *mark* the line between. The body also *is* the line, and as such it has properties of both binary sides. In other words, the body is the paradigmatic limen, and liminality—the space between binary pairs—pervades this thesis because liminality, as an organising and defining principle, unlocks potential and possibility. For the adolescent girl, bodily potentiality is crucial because the body is the very thing by which she is othered.

Finally, I focus on multiple examples of bodily instability and change, not at the exclusion of other possible examples but to avoid the truth-claims that would accompany a reading of a single image of embodiment—for example, menarche or birth, those particularly female examples. Through looking at multiple instances in which the body is unstable, changeable, deceptive or not entirely human, I seek to avoid simply replacing one dominant hegemonic narrative of self with a different dominant narrative of self. Rather, I aim to offer models for conceiving of the embodied, adolescent self in relation to and interdependent with other embodied selves. Imperatively, I, and these mythopoeic YA fantasy, texts do not engage such possibilities casually: popular and media culture’s preoccupation with the singular, stable, fit, and whole body is underscored by a profound fear of losing the self. It is one evidenced by the obsession with appearance, but its roots are much deeper, stretching for the purposes of this thesis to the very mythology underpinning Western ontological positions. Owing to this, these texts do acknowledge the complex relationship between body and self, including potential loss of self, but they engage the issue in order to demonstrate the prospects that open up when the body is conceived of as visually unreliable (Garber 1992; Flanagan 2008), animal (Haraway 2008; Walsh 2013), more-than-one (Battersby 1998), and mechanical (Haraway 1991; Flanagan 2011 and 2014).

FROM GIRL POWER TO A POSTFEMINIST SENSIBILITY

Pierce and Meyer not only offer a particularly sustained engagement with issues of the body, but they also offer a provocative timeline. Spanning just over three decades (1983 to present), Pierce and Meyer's texts parallel the narrative arcs—excesses of expectation, Girl Power and increasing emphasis on appearance—that have coalesced into their current forms within the discursive space of popular and media culture.¹⁰ In other words, whilst I read mythopoeic YA fantasy as offering alternatives to mainstream narratives of living and being an adolescent female body, it is impossible to disentangle these texts from the wider discursive space within which they sit. In this way, this thesis sits alongside the social history work of, for example, Joan Jacob's Brumberg (1998), in *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls* and Carol Dyhouse (2013), in *Girl Trouble: Panic and Progress in the History of Young Women*. These projects read, across the last century, the (hi)story of living and being an adolescent female—and body—in the contexts of the United States and Great Britain.

Coinciding with the birth of “adolescence” as a distinct period between childhood and adulthood (Hall 1904), Brumberg and Dyhouse's social histories of girlhood begin around the turn of the century and both posit the mid-twentieth century as marking a particular turn to the body, although with slightly different emphasis—commercialism and social discourses, respectively. For example, Brumberg (1998) argues that the 1950s seem to have been the decade of the breast, at least in terms of mass-produced bras and the standardization of cup sizes—both of which had the effect of increasing adolescent self-consciousness, when one did not “measure up” (110). Dyhouse (2013), on the other hand, focuses on the “moral panics” surrounding the adolescent girl and her body (225): she is *too* girly, *too* laddish, *too* sexy, and *too* bossy. While the characteristics of these excesses are interesting—the polarity of too laddish *and* too sexy, for example—the point is how each is conceived as, ever increasingly, playing out on the body. For example, through phenomenological arguments, the above characteristics (girly, laddish, sexy and

¹⁰ Pierce's Tortall Universe comprises seventeen novels and several short stories and Meyer's universe currently comprises 5 novels, with a 2-book graphic novel duology set for release in 2017, see Cavna (2016).

bossy) become phenomenons of the body as they structure how the body is lived, that is, while girly requires one set of actions and laddish other, *both* are available for reading on the body.

While the mid-twentieth century may have begun this shift, the twenty-first century has seen such a proliferation in commercialism, along with deregulation and privatization,¹¹ that a neoliberal choice biography is now also in place. Rosalind Gill (2007) defines this choice biography as,¹²

the contemporary injunction to render one's life knowable and meaningful through a narrative of free choice and autonomy, however constrained one actually might be. (154)

As the body is the site upon which “choices” are made and made manifest, the choice biography not only increases concerns with and of the body, but does so in such a way that excesses of expectation are now inflicted freely and willingly by the girl herself, as she “chooses”. Moreover, this choice biography defines the discursive shape of adolescence: the appearance of limitless choice alongside an overwhelming presence of social and media culture that subtly, and not so subtly, defines the “right” choice.

This particular arc of the neoliberal self begins in the early 1990s (slightly later than the 1983 publication of Pierce's first Tortall book), and it is most recognisable in terms of the Spice Girls popularising of Girl Power. However, while Girl Power—particularly the Spice Girls' brand of “strength and courage and a Wonderbra” (Spiers 1997)—is perhaps the dominant, popular narrative emanating from this period, it exists directly in contention with, and perhaps because of, what Rebecca Hains (2012) terms “the girl crisis” (1). A coalescing of various academic, political, commercial, and popular discourses, the “girl crisis” saw the girl as a figure of concern. Even the Riot Grrrls, the first proponents of Girl Power were—for their eschewing of conventional markers of femininity and commerciality—pathologised as girls in crisis, because of their

¹¹ Broadly, both describe the lessening of (obvious) government intervention in the daily lives of individuals; privatization speaks to the particular manifestation of deregulation in the United Kingdom, under, especially, the Thatcher government.

¹² See, also, Rose (1996) and Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001).

non-mainstream endeavours at self fashioning, they were (perceived as) girls in crisis.

In its role as a governmental paper, *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America* (Montiegel 1991) established the tone of this “new” discourse: not only are girls at risk—from popular culture’s “marginalizing women and stereotyping their roles” as well as school’s “unintention[al] [...] collu[sion]” in this positioning (7)—but they are also the key to America’s success and thus doubly worth care and concern.¹³ Yet, this particular narrative is not new. The accounts of adolescent girls, and of girlhood itself, offered by both Brumberg (1998) and Dyhouse (2013), show that such cultural concern, anxiety, and expectation have always already surrounded this liminal figure.¹⁴ The 1990s simply saw these concerns become more *visible* than ever before, a visibility secured by the abundance of “girls studies” texts published by the popular press, in the years following *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America* (Montiegal 1991). From *Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self Esteem, and the Confidence Gap* (Orenstein 1994) to *Failing at Fairness: How Our Schools Cheat Girls* (Sadker and Sadker 1994), the “girl”—as ripe for saving—was a hot commodity, a point best made by the phenomenally successful *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* (Pipher 1994). Tapping into the fears of parents, Pipher’s text both defines and establishes the “girl poisoning culture” in which the adolescent girl of the 1990s existed (267). The frightening element: how little the story has changed in the intervening years.

Despite appearing to have access to more choice and opportunity than ever before, the twenty-first century “girl” is still fragile and weaker than the “boy,” else Always’ (2014) #LikeAGirl campaign would not need to exist. Designed to call attention to and to end the stereotypical positing of running, throwing, or fighting “like a girl” as somehow less than a boy’s undertaking of those actions, this campaign—in simply existing—acknowledges that girls are

¹³ For examples in a similar vein, including one earlier contender for first, see: Gilligan (1982) (re-released 1993) and Brown and Gilligan (1992).

¹⁴ Regarding the cultural concern, see also, Lesko (1996), (2001) and (2012), McRobbie (2000b), Giroux (2003), and Gonick (2006).

still perceived as weaker and less athletic than boys.¹⁵ If teenaged girls and young women, the persons adolescent girls are becoming, were not still at the mercy of over-sexualisation, there would have been no nude photo scandal in 2014.¹⁶ Expressing sexuality through the personal sharing of sexually explicit images would just be sexuality; it would not be deviant. It would not be scandal (see, also, McKinney 2014; Valenti 2014; Duck 2015). If body image were still not an issue, Lammily® would not have secured, through crowd-sourcing and in less than 24-hours, 101% of its needed funding to create a doll (also called Lammily) based on average, typical body sizes—not Barbie’s measurements (Lamm 2014).¹⁷ Goldieblox would not be, very successfully, turning STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and maths) into toys—problematically pink in colour—specifically marketed at girls, if girls were not still excluded from those subjects.¹⁸

¹⁵ In 1980, Iris Marion Young effectively made this advertisement’s argument in “Throwing like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment Motility and Spatiality.” Moreover, Young developed the line of enquiry in 2005 with *On Female Body Experience: “Throwing Like a Girl” and Other Essays*. The point is two-fold: the issue of “throwing like a girl” is not new and contemporary culture has seen a conflation of previously “academic” issues discussed in a popular vernacular, a crossroads at which this thesis arguably sits.

¹⁶ Commonly known as “celebgate” or “the fappening,” this scandal was the result of the social media site 4Chan’s hack of Apple’s iCloud and the subsequent sharing of some five-hundred private images of celebrities, including Jennifer Lawrence, Kate Upton, Cara Delevingne, and many others. The images stolen and disseminated were predominantly of women and frequently included sexually explicit or nude photographs.

¹⁷ In 2016, Barbie® countered, or attempted to, its own ideal through “the expansion of its Fashionistas® line with the addition of three new body types—tall, curvy and petite—and a variety of skin tones, hair styles and outfits” (Mazzocco 2016). For discussions of this addition, see, for example, Abrams (2016) and Colon (2016).

¹⁸ Regarding what has come to be called the “pinkification” of culture and toys see, Bates (2014), Cochrane (2014), and Orenstein (2011). Prior to the late eighties, children’s toys were varied in colour and not overtly marketed to one gender or the other. However, the Regan administration’s deregulation—the lessening of government influence in relation to children’s television and advertising, in this case—led to the clear dividing lines, pink for girls and blue for boys, that exist today. For a detailed explanation of the larger economic policy of which deregulation was a part and of deregulation itself, see Niskanen

Reaching a zenith in the early 2000s with a proliferation of Internet technologies, this narrative of “Girl Power” in tension with “Girl Saving” is now also characterised by a neoliberal fashioning of the self. It is a fashioning that each of the above examples plays into: the consumerism embedded in the Dove, Lammily, and Goldieblox narratives speaks to the power of choice through purchase, while the nude photo scandal represents the shaming that occurs with the *wrong* choices. This is the choice biography, the primary mechanism of neoliberal self fashioning that dominates contemporary popular and media culture. The choices an individual makes determine her self and because she has “freely” chosen—to grow her hair long, a certain style of clothing, or to not be involved in those STEM subjects—she gains agency. It is through choice that the neoliberal self is constructed. The question is: just how free and open is that choice?

Thus, while neoliberalism has been criticised as a “catchall” and as devoid of any real meaning,¹⁹ Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff (2011) note in the “Introduction” to *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism, and Subjectivity* that the term is still relevant, particularly to women.

It is *women* who are called on to self-manage, to self-discipline. To a much greater extent than men, women are required to work on and transform the self, to regulate every aspect of their conduct, and to present all their actions as freely chosen.²⁰ (7)

This work often takes the form of transformations enacted upon one’s appearance, an issue that I discuss in detail through the makeover paradigm, both in this chapter as well as in readings of Cinder(ella). The illusion of choice offered by this mechanism is of primary concern in this introduction whereas Chapter Two’s look at Cinder, from Marissa Meyer’s *Lunar Chronicles*, begins to complicate the paradigm, though also serving as a useful demonstration of how embedded even the most counter or sub-cultural text is within its wider

(1988). Digitally, *The Library of Economics and Liberty* offers a concise explanation; see Niskanen (2002).

¹⁹ See, for example, Rowlands and Rawolle (2013) and Hilgers (2013).

²⁰ Bartky (1988) makes a similar argument.

discursive space; Cinder's narrative may contest the paradigm, but it still engages it.

Finally, these neoliberal narratives of choice are also a marker of the postfeminist sensibility that Gill argues characterises contemporary media culture. Gill describes this sensibility as,

the notion that femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; the emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline; a focus upon individualism, choice and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm; a resurgence in ideas of natural sexual difference; a marked sexualization of culture; and an emphasis upon consumerism and the commodification of difference. (2007, 149)

The female adolescent's existence—particularly her existence as a body—touches, in varying degrees, each of these features. Aside from describing a postfeminist sensibility, Gill's description also works as a framework for self-becoming within contemporary popular and media culture. In terms of the adolescent girl, it is a framework that, despite appearing to offer "choice and empowerment," is limiting: how much choice is she really afforded, when the wrong choices pathologise her as a girl in crisis, as a girl needing saving? What sacrifices come with such an insistence—at the expense of community—on the individual? How "individual" is individual, when every other girl is aiming for the same—young, thin and fit—individual? Are there not ways of being female and feminine that do not refuse the body's fleshiness and its potential for change? It is these questions, as well as others, that this thesis explores, while also exploring the alternatives made possible by mythopoeic YA fantasy.

NEOLIBERAL CHOICE BIOGRAPHIES: #GIRLSCAN #SHINESTRONG, WITH COVERGIRL AND PANTENE

"Yeah, girls can," according to a recent Internet campaign launched by CoverGirl (2014), while Pantene (2013) suggests, girls, and women, should "Be Strong and Shine." Featuring celebrities, models, and musicians, like: Ellen DeGeneres, P!nk, Katy Perry, and Sofia Vergara, the CoverGirl ad overtly attacks the gender stereotypes that suggest "girls can't"—"rock," "be strong," "dance like crazy,"

“rap,” or “own businesses” (2014, n.p.) while Pantene’s ad focuses on the conflicting “Labels Against Women” (2013, n.p.) With a cover of Gary Jules’ “Mad World” as background, gendered comparisons—he is a “boss;” she is “bossy” or he is “neat;” she is “vain”—draw attention to the binary construction of men and women (Ibid.). Further still, the CoverGirl campaign makes a valiant attempt at widening these gender stereotypes, including race and sexual orientation as latent messages within its video. Appearing as copy, Pantene’s final message—“Don’t let labels hold you back”—complements the sentiment nicely (2013, n.p.). However, both adverts are troublesome: yes, #GirlsCan #ShineStrong—with CoverGirl and Pantene, or so the message reads. These advertisements, cloaked as campaigns, offer success through the purchase of products. More, as these are both companies that deal in hair and beauty products, they slip in the notion that physical appearance—maintaining a certain appearance, with their products—is key to this success (Duberman 2014). In this way, the body becomes the girl’s and woman’s source of (em)power(ment), as well as something she must control (Gill 2007, 149; Wolf 1991).

Crucially, these advertisement also speak to Judith Butler’s (1997) concern with the re-citing of hate speech that occurs in the processes of censorship, as in order to censor speech, the speech must be rearticulated and recirculated, albeit as that which is to be censored. Butler suggests, “the censor is compelled to repeat the speech that the censor would prohibit. No matter how vehement the opposition to speech is, its recirculation inevitably reproduces trauma as well” (37). This is exactly that which is occurring in these “body positive” campaigns. Issues of consumerism aside, these “empower-ads” (Delamere 2015) do not straightforwardly counter the stereotypical images of being a girl or woman. In its superficial engagement with the hero journey, the *Song of the Lioness* quartet (Pierce 1983–1988) reflects this problem, though the subsequent *Tortall* books as well as *The Lunar Chronicles* (Meyer 2012–2015) make progress towards ameliorating it, as I discuss in Chapter Two.

Within the discursive space of contemporary popular and media culture, the body that is the adolescent girl’s source of power is vastly different from the adolescent female’s flesh, blood, and material body, especially in terms of the

bodily changes marking it as adolescent. The body that is her source of agency, and thus self, is a discursively produced body, one comprised of all those things that beauty culture tells her it must be: spray tans and SPANX®, nose jobs and gym visits. Moreover, this body is ideally represented by an image, not by the body itself, a phenomenon epitomised by the images of media (the celebrity) and social media (the selfie). These images work as mirrors telling girls and women how to be bodies and selves. This body also requires a certain amount of “body obsession” on the part of women existing within this discursive space, a position that prevents girls and women from ever fully enjoying, or having access to, the body’s potential. This is the “beauty work” made explicit in *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women* (Wolf 1991, 15). For Wolf,

The beauty myth tells a story: The quality called ‘beauty’ objectively and universally exists. Women must want to embody it and men must want to possess women who embody it. (12)

“Beauty” becomes a currency for exchange: if you have it, you have power and agency; if you do not, you work to get it. In this way, Wolf argues that the beauty myth is always actually “prescribing behavior and not appearance” (14). Thus, the myth is also about control, about the control of women by patriarchy, since hegemonic, patriarchal discourse’s ever-changing ideal always indicates new work for women within the discursive space (13). Furthermore, with what it means to be woman existing on the body (Gill 2007), these beauty practices are also practices of the self, and thus, the risk with failing is great: if you fail not only are you not beauty(ful), you are also not feminine. You are not woman.

This is the makeover paradigm; or, the notion that individuals, primarily woman, see their bodies (and selves) not only as amenable to, but also in need of, improvement (see, also, Gill 2007). It is a view of the world, and of being self within the world, that depends on an increased concern with appearance, often focusing quite intensely on young girls. It is a concern that has seen both the locating of femininity on the body—being woman depends upon the body appearing female and feminine—as well as a peculiar conflation of self (identity) with image (body). For example, *The Hunger Games*’ Katniss

Everdeen is the “girl on fire” because, as her dress magically alights, she appears as such (Collins 2008–2010), an appearing made explicit in the books’ film adaptations (Ross 2012 and Lawrence 2013; 2014; 2015). Yet, this is a precarious sort of femininity—one that depends not only on correct purchases and successful makeover endeavours but also one that renders sexuality as sexy, a superficial performance of being sexed. In other words, what it means to be a woman or girl is secured through the performance of a sexed body (Orenstein 2011). Yet, what does such a rendering mean for one’s sense of self, especially when the results of such transforming offer both a “heightened fantasy femininity” (Cochrane 2014) that is impossible to ever achieve and an “economy of sameness” (Weber 2005) that produces overwhelming homogeneity?

PLEASING ONE’S SELF(IE): ILLUSIONS OF CHOICE

The selfie: large eyes, defined cheekbones, styled and stylish hair contained, most frequently, within the square frame of an Instagram photo.²¹ From the Pope to celebrities (Alexander 2013), ordinary girls and world leaders, everyone is snapping—and posting—selfies, Ellen DeGeneres even managed to crash Twitter with a celebrity filled selfie, taken during the 2014 Oscars (Gerick 2014).²² Barak Obama, David Cameron and Helle Thorning-Schmidt’s selfie—taken at Nelson Mandela’s memorial service—caused such political fallout that news of the selfie superseded news of the service itself (Selby 2013; Anthony 2013), and selfie sticks have even been banned from sporting and music events as well as museums and theme parks the world over. In short, the selfie is now the ubiquitous image of the ideal self, styled and contained.

²¹ On the 7th of April 2014, Instagram listed more than 96 million photographs tagged with #selfie, by the 24th of July 2015, the tag found 300 million. Selfies are also shared on other social media sites, like, Twitter, Facebook and Tumblr.

²² Katie Warfield (2014a) suggests that this two-pronged description—an image of one’s self that is taken with the intent of being shared, most typically, through social media—is the definition of a selfie.

There are two key discourses surrounding the selfie, one positive and the other negative. First, taking and posting selfies is an empowering act of self-creation and one that affords girls a space in which to not only bond through the sharing of images of themselves but to also support and encourage one another through positively engaging one another's photos. As an exemplar of neoliberal narratives of choice, the selfie is empowering because the adolescent girl herself "chooses" not just to participate in the trend but also which image of herself will be posted. Thus, the posting of a selfie suggests, at the most basic, an instance of personal pride (Simmons 2013). It is within this frame that Katie Warfield's current work on selfies is situated (see, 2014a and 2014b). For Warfield, selfies allow girls the opportunity to challenge dominant scopic regimes by being in control of their image;²³ while I do not agree with Warfield's argument, she does offer a sustained criticism of the negative discourse of selfies.

This, the other discourse surrounding the selfie, suggests that taking and posting selfies is harmful to girls (Ryan 2013).²⁴ More widely, selfies limit the possibilities of being an adolescent girl, as opposed to expanding them, and it is within this discourse of selfies that my own reading sits; I believe selfies can only ever offer the illusion of agency and control because of their overwhelming homogeneity and the sheer weight of that homogeneity across cultural spheres. The majority of selfies feature an excruciatingly repeated image: young, fit girl with long flowing hair and sultry (pouty) expression. It is in this taking into account the image—the one produced and posted—that I feel Warfield's argument is lacking, for this image is more a reflection of the requirements of

²³ In some ways, this argument speaks to Kathleen Sweeney's (2008) call for "media literacy," as Sweeney calls for a media literacy that is achieved through placing cameras—video cameras, not the highly specific front-facing cameras of mobile phones that are used for taking selfies—in girl's hands. In doing so, Sweeney suggests girls will be able to see how images are framed and otherwise manipulated, thus breaking the illusion of perfection.

²⁴ Newspaper (including digital editions) and magazine articles clearly demonstrate—while also, perhaps, creating and certainly perpetuating—this divide. Rachel Simmons' (2013) "Selfies are Good for Girls" represents, quite succinctly, the positive side (selfies are empowering acts of agency), while Erin Ryan's (2013) "Selfies Aren't Empowering. They are a Cry for Help" expresses the views of the negative angle (selfies are narcissistic).

beauty culture than any positive stand towards female self-empowerment (see, also, Ryan 2013). The selfie that is “liked”—the selfie that inspires positive comments—is the selfie that meets (or exceeds) the standards of beauty culture. In this way, the selfie is not about individual (re)presentation. The taking and posting of a selfie is not a choice; it is an illusion of a choice. The illusion that one has unconstrained freedom to choose,²⁵ as while the options may be limitless, the “right” choices are not. Moreover, the selfie is really about being chosen—for getting your choice right—than it is about choosing for yourself.

Thus, the selfie offers not choice, but the illusion of choice, and it is an illusion of choice that extends to many of the other choices “available” to adolescent girls. The selfie also makes evident a fetishizing of the fit, able adolescent female body. Thus, not only has the ideal appearance coalesced around a very particular image, but as we continue to get older sooner and stay younger longer, the ideal is also becoming more and more pervasive, stretching to include younger and older women within its scope. In order to (only ever temporarily) placate this desire and to remain an active subject with popular and media culture, the adolescent girl must continually choose to reinvent herself, aiming for the ever-changing, highly specified ideal. There is always work to be done, and the pressure to meet these exacting standards, coupled with those narratives of choice, has led to a culture of perfectionism: the adolescent girl *must* choose to do it all perfectly, whilst also looking perfect.

Finally, neoliberal practices of the self depend on the visibility of the results of one’s choices because the “right” choices are necessary in order for the self to be produced as active and empowered. With femininity (what it means to be woman) existing on the body, girls and women are required within the frame of the neoliberal choice biography to construct themselves *as* girls and women by appearing appropriately feminine, by appearing, most pervasively, “sexy.” The selfie is the now dominant means of proving one’s choices. If, as Gill (2007) argues, the body is in postfeminist media culture the

²⁵ Hilgers (2013) suggests neoliberalism has been brought about by a “regulated deregulation” (75). This notion goes some way towards explaining the limits on free choice.

“window to the individual’s interior life,” the selfie is the securing of that interior life, that identity, writ large (150). In so being other possible ways of knowing the body—touch, for example—are excluded (Grosz 1994),²⁶ and it is this insistence that places ever more weight on one’s appearance (Bordo 1993). Yet, mythopoeic YA fantasy—as is evident in both Tamora Pierce’s and Marissa Meyer’s work—foregrounds other such ways of knowing, an issue developed throughout but one I especially turn to in the Conclusions.

* * *

While I posit mythopoeic YA fantasy as a counter or subcultural space to popular and media culture, the relationship between the two is not binary. Rather, the two discourses—hegemonic fantasies of being a girl and fantastical narrations of being a girl—are interwoven and overlapping. In short, where popular and media culture offers illusions of choice, impossible ideals and silences, mythopoeic YA fantasy—because it is fantasy—offers bodies that express multiplicity and difference, thereby offering frameworks for living and being a body that challenge the dominant, hegemonic fantasy of adolescence. This reconfiguring of the body is essential. Because the body is that by which she is excluded, the body must be mapped differently in order for inclusion—of difference, change, and multiplicity—to occur. Thus, this thesis maps these frameworks, speaking from the silenced position within, and between, the binary oppositions—popular and media culture/mythopoeic YA fantasy, male/female, mind/body, human/animal, human/machine, abled/disabled—underpinning this discursive construction. I do so in order to ask: what happens to the self, and to its relationship with other selves, when it is conceived of as both embodied and non-binary?

²⁶ It is also peculiarly anti-Aristotelian. Peculiar, as it was Aristotle (and Plato) who established the hierarchical dualisms ordering discourse that, in turn, have given rise to the binary oppositions that are so problematic today: male/female; mind/body; adult/child. It is anti in as much as Aristotle called for rational argument as essential proof as opposed to the visual.

Thus, where Chapters One and Two establish mythopoeic YA fantasy (the wider field of YA and the genre of mythopoeic YA fantasy), Chapters Three and Four as well as, to some extent, the Conclusions offer close textual analysis of instances of cross-dressing, “glamouring,” menstruation (including pregnancy), shape-shifting and being cyborg in Tamora Pierce’s *Tortall Books* and Marissa Meyers *Lunar Chronicles*. I structure the thesis in this way because, while I read my specific examples as operating in a counter or subcultural space, they can not only not be separated from the space(s) within which they sit, but the relationship is also far more complex than simple antithesis.

Chapter Three, “Appearances May Be Deceiving” explores the appearance of the body and what happens to the self, to identifying as a self, when the body’s appearance is not only changeable but may also not correspond to the self that it is meant to represent. Through four case studies concerning specific instances in which the body is not what it appears to be or in which it actively conceals an interiority, alongside narrations that explicitly show bodily instability, this chapter asks: what are the consequences for subjectivity if the “represented self” is not the same as the “self represented”?

Chapter Four “Speaking the Unspeakable and Breaking Cultures of Silence” focuses on woman’s exclusion from the Symbolic, that is to say representation. It is interested in how narrations of bodily instability engage with and overcome this exclusion. This chapter takes its shape from the monomyth (Campbell), the pattern of (male) identity formation that directly influences the shape of adolescent development in popular and media culture. In taking this shape for the chapter’s structure, I am able to demonstrate how adolescent girls are bodily excluded from signification, while also exploring what it would take in order for them not to be excluded. Thus, Chapter Four asks: what happens to, and for, representation when the female body is taken as norm? When we all speak the unspeakable?

“Conclusions: Alternative Ways of Being and Perceiving a Body,” offers conclusions, in as much as it offers potential alternatives both to the journey of adolescence—the becoming adult that is the goal of this liminal period—as well as to conceiving the adolescent female body and self. It is a self-reflexive final chapter, one that returns to the issues raised throughout this thesis. It is also a

chapter of possibilities, in that, a focus on two kinds of relation (repetition and connection) available in Pierce's *Song of the Lioness* and *Immortals* quartets as well as Meyer's *Lunar Chronicles*, it offers a model self—exemplified by a metaphorical notion of “the Pack”—that is based in an economy of relation, as opposed to hegemonic opposition.

CHAPTER ONE

YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE: THE LITERATURE AND ITS ADOLESCENT

Issues of “coming of age” and of “maturing” pervade YAL and not just in terms of story lines: both the criticism and the literature have been “coming of age” for, at least, the last quarter century (see, also, Gallo 1992; Monseau and Salvner 1992; Hunt 1996; Moore 1997).²⁷ Recently, both may have even come of age (see, also, Monseau and Salvner 2000; Wilder and Teasley 2000; Soter and Conners 2009; Brown 2011; Garcia 2013; Hill 2014). However, whether YAL or YAL criticism has, or has not, reached some point of maturation is not my concern; rather, I am concerned with how—because of its liminality (it is “in-between children/adult literature)—YAL is problematically perceived as perpetually *needing* to become. As neither children’s literature nor (adult) literature, YAL is perceived as difficult, if not impossible, to define—many avoid doing so by including it under the umbrella of children’s literature because children’s literature is stable, secure, and known. In other words, the structural reliance on binary oppositions—in this case between child/adult and children’s literature/literature—makes young adult literature and the young adult it hails structural anomalies, and the refusal to recognise and to theorise this liminality is restrictive as it is why both the body of literature and the critical engagement of that literature are so preoccupied with becoming, at the expense of being.

Yet, in *Constructing Adolescence in Fantastic Realism*, Alison Waller (2009) calls for “a separate critical methodology” of YAL (14), and she calls for this methodology “in order to theorise young adult literature’s very in-

²⁷ Trites (1996b and 2000) makes a distinction between YA novels and, what she calls the wider, adolescent literature. The first concerns books *for* adolescents, specifically those marketed as being “for adolescents.” These would be the texts to which she turns in order to establish, through a Foucauldian reading of power, the characteristics of YA novels. The latter, for Trites, is a more general field of literature that might concern adolescents without specifically being *for* them, see, also, Small (1992) and Olson (1993).

betweenness or liminality” (14).²⁸ In making such an appeal, Waller offers a twofold suggestion. First, it is time to move beyond the defending of YAL’s status as a field and towards a more theoretical and critical engagement with the literature. Second, this critical focus should take into account the liminality marking both the field and the adolescent it hails (see, also, Day, Green-Barteet, and Montz 2014; Flanagan 2014). This thesis answers Waller’s call by recognising and engaging the liminality of YAL and of young adults themselves as crucial. The young adult person, or book, is neither one (child/’s book) nor the other (adult/’s book). The young adult is, rather, between the two, touching both sides of the oppositional pair. Thus, liminality is key, and in order to begin this theorising of liminality as well as a concomitant bodily instability, this chapter explores the young adult—both in terms of the generic label and the adolescent addressed by that label—aspect of mythopoeic YA fantasy.²⁹ This chapter is, thus, a two-part reading: the literature and the adolescent hailed by the literature.

Thus, while I demonstrate across the chapter, the ways in which this thesis engages and develops the existing field, I begin by establishing the adolescent and the shape of adolescence. I begin here, rather than with the literature, because without the adolescent, the literature could not have come

²⁸ Importantly, Waller is not alone in this call for a critical engagement of YAL. I mention her specifically because of the nature—to engage the liminality—of her plea. However, this sort of appeal has been occurring since the mid-1990s. The 1996 spring issue of the *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* was dedicated to YAL and theory (Trites 1996a). From that issue, see especially, Hunt (1996) and Trites (1996b). For more recent works requesting a theoretical engagement of this literature, see, for example, Alsup (2010a) and Coats (2011). Hunt (2014) suggests that critical engagement is still a “growing body,” while also calling for that growth to continue.

²⁹ In addressing issues of distinctiveness and worth, I am well aware that I am engaging, by re-citing, the very problems I do not wish to engage. In this vein, a particular merit of, for example, Flanagan (2014) is how rather than placing itself within these debates, the text simply gets on with the task of addressing the issues of posthumanism in YAL. However, I engage this situating for two reasons: first, because of the nature of this project, in that, a thesis requires a certain amount of situating itself within the wider field, but also, and more importantly, because of liminality. These issues of distinctiveness and worth stem from a refusal to acknowledge and thus to theorize—because of the pervasiveness of binaries—liminality.

into existence as well as because of how the “motive forces” of adolescence are the same forces of both YA literature and YA criticism.³⁰ Critically, this is not to divide the two into oppositional categories. It is not to posit the adolescent as more “real” or “true” than the literature (or vice versa); rather, the chapter demonstrates just how interwoven the two are. I start with the adolescent and adolescence because the liminality of both the creature and the period provides a lens through which to read both the literature and the criticism of the literature.

THE ADOLESCENT: BIOLOGICALLY DETERMINED

In order to explore just who the adolescent girl is, it is useful, if not also conventional, to start with the categories of child and adult. The discursive relationship, that is to say the hegemonic fantasy, between the two—the “adult” as sexuality, experience and corruption and the “child” as asexuality, innocence and purity—is obvious and certain, in as much as binaries offer the appearance of such. It is a distinction that happens within discourse (language), but it is one that has a very real impact on, at least the perception of, the bodies behind, and within, the construction. Setting up Peter Pan as the ideal child of this formation—he cannot be touched; he is eternal child—Jacqueline Rose (1984) argues that this binary opposition involves the disembodiment of the child within discourse so that adult “normal” heterosexuality and its stability may be secured. Adolescence disrupts the fantasy.

The very notion of adolescence as a discrete period between childhood and adulthood—if, by nature, it can be discrete—hinges on a heightened instance of biological determinism: the adolescent *is* adolescent because of the changes occurring to his/her body. In fact, G. Stanley Hall’s (1904) landmark, two-volume study *Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*—that effectively

³⁰ As Chapter Two discusses, Rank ([1909] 1959) makes this link between the “motive forces” of adolescence (as part of the family drama) and the hero journey (67).

brought the category into existence—heralded puberty as its initial maker.³¹ However, this anchoring of adolescence—a discursive category—within biological frameworks that are posited as “true” or “real” is questionable as bodily transformations are unreliable. With notions like “late-bloomer,” the beginning is fraught (see, also, Roberts 2015), and as it lacks a biological marker, adolescence’s ending is even more uncertain (see, also, Furedi 2003 and Wallis 2013). Still, refusing any other changes (psychological or social) that may occur during this period, the bodily changes of puberty serve as the defining marker of adolescence, for both males and females. Thus, the conventional understanding of adolescence is a discursive rendering of biology-as-truth in order to secure that which disrupts the ordering of binary oppositions; the adolescent does not fit within either the adult or child categories, so the biological changes of puberty are offered as an uneasy explanation for the instability and liminality marking the adolescent as adolescent.

Waller (2009) argues “biological determinism [...] helps to tie teenagers to their bodies, gender roles and sexualities in conventional ways” (32). In other words, pubertal changes mark the body not just as feminine, that is to say woman, but also as heterosexually feminine.³² Thus, this is not just a rendering of biology-as-truth. It is a rendering of biology-as-truth of how the shape-change into an adult woman should occur in order to bring this hegemonic fantasy into being. In one sense, this foreshadows how YAL is concerned with

³¹ See, more recently, Spacks (1981), Russell (1988), Neubauer (1992), Baxter (2008). Coleman (2010), alongside earlier editions, offers a particularly nuanced and exhaustive study of the shape of adolescence. Finally, this developmental theory—heavily influenced by cognitive development that is structured by biological stages—also underscores the work of Jean Piaget, see, especially, Piaget and Inhelder (1958); Piaget (1962); Piaget and Inhelder (1969). Elkind (1981) gives a succinct reading of the shifts in Piaget’s conceptualizing adolescent development.

³² While LGBTQ issues are not within the scope of this thesis, there is a strong vein of YAL offering alternatives to this narrative of (en)forced heterosexuality. In terms of mythopoeic YA fantasy, Malinda Lo’s fiction is an excellent example, see: *Ash* (2009a) and *Huntress* (2011), especially. Furthermore, TeamEpicRead’s (2013) “25 Must-Read YA Books Featuring Gay Protagonists” is a useful introduction into the LGBTQ genre, as it is termed.

adolescence. As a literature, it exists to assist the adolescent outside of the text, by means of the adolescent inside the text, into the appropriate single, stable (adult) identity, an identity that includes heterosexuality.

Here, my concern is with the body and with how the transition from child to adult is secured in the body, thus associating adolescence with an overwhelming biological determinism, one particularly affecting *female* adolescence because the adolescent girl is becoming woman.³³ In *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*, Elizabeth Grosz (1994) notes, “women are somehow *more* biological, *more* corporeal, and *more* natural than men” (14, emphasis original). The female body is perceived as not just biological, corporeal and natural but as “more” of each of these things, a more that is always threatening to escape the binary’s control. The adolescent girl—who is already “more biological” because of the pubertal changes marking her as adolescent—is becoming “*more* biological” because she is becoming-woman.

This “biological-ness” of the female body is an argument central to *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir ([1949] 1997). Concerned with unpicking the myth of woman—the “eternal feminine”—Beauvoir elucidates the myth, or fantasy, of biology-as-truth, and its relation to the production of the girl-child as a gendered body that is becoming-woman. She describes how at the time of puberty, the female body, within this myth, announces itself as female through the development of breasts, the widening of hips, growth of body hair, and menarche. Here, the adolescent female body becomes gendered as feminine through the physical changes of puberty. In other words, prior to these biological changes, the female-child’s body is asexual because it is unmarked by the feminine contours that would code it as woman and sexual, a notion my reading of Alanna’s cross-dressing in Pierce’s Song of the Lioness quartet (1983–1988) develops—and complicates—throughout the following chapters. Here, the adolescent female becomes embodied in a way that her male counterparts escape, and this excessive embodiment is that by which the adolescent girl is excluded from dominant, hegemonic models of self.

³³ See, for example, Kipkie 1999; Avshalom, Lynam, Moffit and Silva 1993; Ge, Conger and Elder 1995.

Biological determinism does not just *define* adolescence it also narrates the shape of the period of adolescence: a linear progression out of childhood and into adulthood, thanks to biological processes driving the action forward. This view is at the centre of conventional understandings of adolescence, and it is one that excludes social (discursive) processes or, at best, relegates them to a peripheral position (see, also, Feldman and Elliot 1990 and 2010; Katchadourian 1990; Fausto-Sterling 1985). In this vein, adolescence is underpinned by what Wood (1984) calls an “ideology of emergence” (73), a notion that Hilton and Nikolejava (2012) also assert in relation to the literature. Calling attention to the problem of biological essentialism, Wood (1984) suggests,

sexuality is [...] left to essentialism (i.e. that the essence of masculinity or femininity is biologically pre-given) without a consideration of how what emerges is due to culture rather than biology. (73)

Adolescence, and the sexual maturity that the period is seen to produce, is posited as natural and naturally occurring through a “paradigm of biological causation,” which Lesko (1996) further describes as a linear, unicausal model” (151). This linear biological model—and the naturalness of adolescence—is exactly that which Lesko (1996) contests.

For Lesko (1996), and myself, the problem with the conventional and typical construction of adolescence is that in being “universal, timeless and massified” the specificity of adolescence in particular cultural spaces, and the difference in the ways in which development occurs, is elided (152). At their most basic, “normal” developmental models posit a white male as the ideal subject of this process and the process itself is linear, determined by the biological changes of puberty. In so being, the female adolescent is excluded—because “the fluctuations of women’s systems,” that is the unpredictability of her reproductive system, renders her “naturally abnormal” (151). She is abnormal because of the “naturalness” (i.e. uncontrollability) of her body. Thus, for Lesko,

it is not enough to study the cultural or social aspects of adolescents, allowing the biological processes to stand as real truths outside of social

processes. We must examine the ontological assertions regarding adolescence and the biological research that establishes them as natural an inevitable. (144)

This is key: there cannot be a binary opposition between biology-perceived-as-truth and “cultural or social aspects” (the discursive) of adolescents because they work together to construct the period.³⁴

Moreover, Robyn McCallum (1999) suggests that “the dominant liberal humanist ethic” underscoring this space “privileges concepts such as the uniqueness of the individual and the essentiality of self, as opposed to concepts of the self as fragmented or plural,” as well as, I suggest, concepts of the self as related to, and interdependent with, other selves (6). This insistence on individuality is achieved by a linear progression from child to adult, a process that limits the options available to adolescent girls. As Allison Waller (2009) suggests, through a use of Kristeva’s (1986) notion of “woman’s time,”

female development is situated as an alternative, an other, in the general framework of development; girls, it is suggested, can only go so far on this progressive route before they slip back into matrilineal patterns of ‘woman’s time.’ (35)

The dominant model of becoming-self (the pattern of adolescent development) within Western rationality is a model that privileges the male subject position, at the expense of, not necessarily a female subject position, but one that takes both males and females into account. In other words, I do not wish to replace the dominant male-centred, binary model with an alternative female one; rather, I seek a model that is not founded in binary oppositions and that is available to *both* adolescent girls as well as boys, as there are, theoretically, infinite positions along the spectrum between the two, if only the binary is refused. For this reason, I believe a new map is in order; a map that offers not only economies of relation but also one that takes the body, its contours and fleshy materiality, into account.

³⁴ In her folkloric approach to the “vernacular” discourses of menstruation, Victoria Louise Newton (2016) takes a similar stance, hovering between a purist social constructionism and a biological determinism in her understanding of the everyday discourses of menstruation.

In popular and media culture, as representative of hegemonic discourse, there is an erasure of the body that not only affects the “natural” female body but that also extends to any body that is perceived as excessive, deviant or different. This is in the controversy surrounding Bruce Jenner’s transformation into Caitlyn (see, for example, Moyer 2015), as it also in Renée Zellweger’s “new face,” one achieved through plastic surgery (see, for example, Hess 2014). While celebrities may make headlines for their deviations, it is also in the shamed and ridiculed photo of an overweight girl, just as much as it is behind the editing or filtering of a selfie. This shame silences the body’s pimple, slightly off-centre jawline or any other of the dozens of possible perceptual imperfections, in hopes of drawing ever nearer to the impossible ideal. Moreover, the instances of shaming and self-policing, of specific concern in Chapter Four, seek to produce not only a heavily stylised image but also one of homogeneity—a sameness that silences the fleshy.

Thus, while I discuss the hegemonic YAL that mythopoeic YA fantasy contests throughout, a few examples of the literature perpetuating dominant images of female adolescence includes but is again not limited to: the Gallagher Girls (Carter 2006–2013) and Heist Society series (Carter 2010–2013), the Rebel Belle series (Hawkins 2014–2016), as well as Zoe Sugg’s *Girl Online* (2014) and the many books by Sarah Dessen, most recently, *Saint Anything* (2015). While these books may appear to offer active and empowered girls, they also repeat the ideal image of popular and media culture—thin, attractive, white and, often, middle class—thus contributing to the silence with which I am concerned. It is for this reason that the cross-dressing, shape-shifting, menstruating, “glamoured” and cyborg bodies—bodies of difference—in mythopoeic YA fantasy are significant. For, these bodies are the bodies that dominant discourses of adolescence would see erased, a point evidenced by the bodies available in hegemonic YAL, a point that is fundamental to my argument that mythopoeic YA fantasy, as a sub- or counter-cultural literature, offers alternative frameworks for living and being an adolescent female body.

For now, the biological (the fleshy and the physical) frequents conceptions of adolescence generally and female adolescence particularly, a construction that relies heavily on readings of biology-as-truth. Yet, as

discursive constructions privilege a superficial, edited image of the body-cum-self, there is also a tension between the fleshy body, marked by the bodily changes of puberty (the “real”), and the ideal body, exemplified by the digital image (the symbolic). This tension produces a silence in relation to the body, and it is one that happens in two ways: *between* oppositions, because the adolescent girl is neither child nor adult, and *within* oppositions, because the adolescent girl is becoming-woman; she is physically shape-changing into woman, and “woman” is the other of the paradigmatic man/woman binary.

Liminality: Silenced Between Oppositions

The first manifestation of this silencing occurs because the female adolescent exists *between* the child/adult binary opposition. It occurs because the adolescent is liminal, neither child nor adult, and in so being a kind of structural impossibility surrounds the figure. First employed by French anthropologist Arnold van Gennep ([1909] 1906) in *Les Rites de Passage*, liminality describes the state of being in-between. Specifically, and in Gennep’s focus, it is the threshold moment during the ritual process of transference, the moment that sees the initiate, in my case the adolescent, as existing between states; she is neither one (the child) nor the other (adult).

While Gennep is concerned with ritual processes in general, Victor Turner’s ([1964] 1972) “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*” specifically focuses on liminality and on the ritual transference of an individual, neophyte in his terminology, from one state—the “relatively fixed or stable condition” between which the liminal person exists—to another (235). In this sense, liminality describes the moment of utter possibility or utter destruction (see, also, Hyde [1998] 2008), and, here, it lends an uncertainty to the category of adolescent. In popular and media culture, it renders the adolescent girl doubly invisible—because she is woman (outside) and adolescent (between). Moreover, this ritual process of transference is key on two levels: YAL itself is an example of ritual transference in as much as it often narrates the transference of child to adult, and the mythopoeic aspect of my key texts brings an additional level of ritual transference in as much as mythopoeic

fantasy texts are, by and large, hero narratives.

Here, however, I am concerned with the adolescent as a figure, or embodiment, of this liminality, and with all the silence that so being engenders within hegemonic discourses. Turner ([1967] 1979) suggests, “the subject of passage ritual is, in the liminal period, structurally, if not physically, ‘invisible’” (235). In the initiation rights with which Turner is concerned, a period of seclusion typically ensues, and while adolescents in the twenty-first century hardly disappear altogether from view, they do increasingly “disappear” from the family home as part of the ritual process in contemporary culture. They join clubs and organisations, they gain freedom to go out with friends, and in so doing, they begin disappearing from their structured place as child typically within a family unit. In this way, Angela McRobbie’s (2000a, especially) work on youth cultures, perhaps, gives Turner’s ritual disappearance modern shape—in the form of youth clubs and (other) subcultural spaces into which young adult and teens disappear.

Finally, as I am concerned with this “structural” invisibility, or absence, of the liminal figure, I do not employ Heather Anastasiu’s (2011) consideration of liminality in relation to the popularity of Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight Saga* (2005–2008). Despite a concern with the reflections of adolescent transference in patternings of the hero’s journey—an issue I discuss in the following chapter—Anastasiu’s psychoanalytic reading of the liminal period does not take into account the embodying of liminality that marks adolescence as adolescence. In other words, Anastasiu’s consideration of liminality does not take into account the silence; it does not take into account the absence of a discourse around bodily change and instability within the West’s image saturated culture. Incidentally, Anastasiu’s focus on the *Twilight Saga* is also outside of my scope, as that series is another example of hegemonic YAL.

Hegemonic patriarchal discourse requires oppositions and their stability in order for its norms and ideals to be maintained: youth cannot be preferred, if age—its opposite—is not derided; thin cannot be admired, if fat is not condemned; fit can not be required, if bodily difference is not abnormal. It is a system based in competition. The adolescent, however, disrupts binary pairs (child/adult, innocence/experience, instability/stability). In a specific look at

the child/adult binary and its success, Waller (2009) comments,

gaps between the two states [child and adult] are more problematic. The teenager resides in the indefinable space between innocence and experience, or asexuality and sexuality, forcing definition that relies on transitory and unstable signifiers. (30)

This is Turner's ([1967] 1979) "structurally [...] 'invisible'" (235). Binary oppositions are the structure of discourse, and adolescents, discursively and bodily, exist in the space between, in the "indefinable," according to Waller. It is also *why* conventional conceptions of adolescence latch onto the bodily changes of puberty—onto that which is "transitory and unstable"—for definition. Adolescents do not have a place within a binary pair, so their definition is that which excludes them.

Lesko (1996) also identifies this "structural invisibility." For her, it is the "coming of age" discourse marking adolescence that silences adolescents, by forcing linear development on them (148). Lesko also notes,

The creation of normal adolescents occurred along the same lines as did the demarcation of wayward girls [...] juvenile delinquency [...] and White trash. (141)

This is a binary constructing of adolescence: normal adolescence is thus because it is not wayward, delinquent or (white) trash. This normalising silences the adolescent, forcing her into binary categories of existence—because she is otherwise liminal. In short, it is the language used to fill the space between oppositions (child/adult) that Lesko finds problematic. It is for this reason that I aim, specifically in Chapter Four, to speak from the silenced positions within and between oppositions.

The narrations of bodily instability with which I am concerned are narrations that speak from both the silenced position within—because they are narrations of woman and body—and between—because they are narrations of uncertainty, change and liminality. Speaking from the space between oppositions is not the only way of undoing the binaries governing Western rationality (see, also, Braidotti 1994; Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Renold and Ringrose 2008); although it is, I feel, particularly relevant to female

adolescence. Narrations of bodily instability operate in—and as—blank spaces: “inter-dict[s],” or a functioning between the states, according to Irigaray ([1974] 1985), and this bodily liminality is pertinent to the female adolescent who is, herself, liminal. Each bodily instability that I read explores a particular kind of liminality: narratives of cross-dressing navigate the blank space between the binary opposition male/female, shape-shifting between human/animal, bleeding between woman/child, and being cyborg between human/machine. Finally, there is also a navigation of the opposition between surface and depth underscoring, and linking, each of these liminalities.

Woman: Silenced Within Oppositions

While adolescence experiences a kind of silence because it is between the oppositional pair comprising childhood and adulthood and adolescents because they are neither child nor adult, the adolescent girl experiences a further silence—or is entering into one—because she is becoming-woman. In other words, this manifestation of silencing occurs within the binary pair man/woman because through the bodily changes of puberty the adolescent girl is becoming-woman; she is shape-changing into woman. Implicit within this system is a privileging of the white male subject who has historically been associated with the mind, and not the body. N. Katherine Hayles (1999) suggests,

Identified with the rational mind, the liberal subject possessed a body but was not usually represented as being a body. Only because the body is not identified with the self is it possible to claim for the liberal subject its notorious universality, a claim that depends on erasing markers of bodily difference, including sex, race, and ethnicity. (4-5)

Through the lens of posthumanism, Hayles offers a critique of the liberal humanist model of self that is the dominant hegemonic model of contemporary Western culture. Here, the male body is essentially blank, despite the very visible marker of its maleness, and this male body is the default body of self—a body that is possessed by the self but not a part of it. As is also the case for the raced or ethnic body (that is not white), this model refuses the female body

because of its difference from this norm, the visible demarcation with breasts and an absence, or lack, with the womb.

Owing to this deviation, woman is “represented as being a body,” a manoeuvre that excludes her from liberal humanistic models of self, an argument that Christine Battersby (1998) makes when she suggests that Western tradition constructs the male body as a “thing capable of being transcended” (19). The male subject-position—the normal subject position—is autonomous; it is not entrapped within a body. The female subject-position is, however, “linked to a fleshy continuity” (10) and that “flesh is [...] monstrous—with a materiality which is more fully immanent” (19). Woman is flesh and this fleshiness—that is monstrous—permeates her very self. This monstrosity stems from a “profound somatophobia,” a fear of the body, which has marked Western philosophy since its inception, as Elizabeth Grosz (1994, 5) argues in relation to her concern with the silencing of woman. Briefly, both Grosz (1994) and Battersby (1998) play a continued role through this thesis, as both are concerned with woman’s exclusion—through her body—from representation. In short, Grosz offers a conceptualizing of the excessive corporeality of woman through a reading of Western philosophy, and Battersby does much the same, though she focuses on pregnancy as a particular manifestation of this excessive corporeality. Effectively, the pregnant body (Battersby) is the body at its most biological, corporeal and natural (Grosz), thus uniting Grosz and Battersby’s arguments. In this way, the excessive corporeality and fleshiness of woman is at the core of my reading, with the adolescent (and also the pregnant woman) serving as a heightened example.

At the core of these readings, the corporeality of this body is the issue. The mind—equally, self, soul, I—is positioned as resolute, unchanging, eternal; whereas, the body is fallible, prone to decay, death. In the *Phaedrus* (360 B.C.E.), Plato describes the body as a “living tomb,” a thing in which the soul is imprisoned (Plato 1982; n.p.).³⁵ This aligning of self with the mind—not as physical, fleshy organ but as representation of self, soul, or “I”—has only

³⁵ The translation of Plato’s *Phaedrus* by Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff sees this sentiment as “not buried in this thing we are carrying around now, which we call a body, locked in it like an oyster in its shell” (Plato 1995, 39).

deepened through the Cartesianism still underscoring Western philosophy today, at least in terms of the narratives of liberal humanism dominating that space, a humanism that is reflected in YAL. Not only does humanism place the human in a position of superiority to animals, the land, machines, effectively anything not “human,” but it also positions man-as-mind, leaving woman trapped within her body—that unruly and uncontrollable thing. It is through this embodiment she becomes his ‘Other’.³⁶ In this way, the othering of the female body is about control, about controlling that which is construed as excessive and thus threatening to the stability of the binary oppositions underpinning this discourse. It is a positioning that hinges upon the sexed nature of the body, in that, the male’s sexual member is visible, thus known, whereas the female’s is invisible and thus unknowable (Freud [1993] 1973).³⁷

Yet, despite this invisibility, the female body makes visible the corporeality of the flesh. It grows breasts, bleeds, produces more bodies, and it is this perceived excessive fleshiness that causes her othering, as fleshiness complicates the stability required of binary oppositions. It is not an untenable positioning, as Gill (2007) suggests femininity, that is what it means to be a woman, is now aligned not just with the body but with its surface: *appearing* appropriately woman means one *is* woman.³⁸ It is this very appearing that popular and media culture seeks to control and contain—especially in terms of those bodies, adolescent and pregnant ones, for example, that make being woman and body particularly obvious. The obviousness threatens the superiority-through-visibility of the phallic, as it depends upon the opposition of woman’s invisible and unknowable sex for its dominance, an issue that Chapter Three directly engages.

Finally, the discursive construction of men and women has, since the Renaissance, positioned woman outside of hegemonic discourse (Flanagan

³⁶ McNay (1998) gives a thorough schematisation of this, what she terms poststructuralist, argument and its displacement of the other in order to secure subjectivity, also positing the mind/body dualism as the “central” dualism (12–13).

³⁷ This known/unknown dichotomy is Irigaray’s ([1974] 1985) grievance in *Speculum of the other Woman*.

³⁸ There is a conflation of female and feminine occurring within this space.

2014), and it has done so through her body. Moreover, it is an exclusion from the Symbolic Order, the register of meaning and subjectivity. As Irigaray ([1984] 1993) terms it in her critiques of Lacan, this is an exclusion from discourse, from meaning, and it leaves woman in a state of *déréliction* (67). In short, woman is excluded from the Symbolic, the order of Western philosophy, discourse and meaning, and it is a bodily exclusion. This is the Symbolic Order, the space in which the hegemonic fantasy of self-through-appearance exists in popular and media culture. Moreover, woman not only lacks access to (masculine) discourse, but she also lacks “access to the signifying economy” of her femaleness ([1974] 1985, 71), in that, discourse includes no space for “red blood” and birth—because, as evidence of the body’s propensity to change and also to fail—such things threaten the stability of the binary oppositions underpinning hegemonic, masculine discourse. Thus, in the exclusion from the Symbolic Order and in the lack of access to a signifying economy, woman is doubly “outsider, the epitome of being subject to [...] [masculine] norms” (ibid.). There is no discourse for fleshy, female subjectivity, and this absence is reflected in both YAL as well as in the critical engagement of it.

YAL: A FIELD OF LITERATURE NEEDING A BODY OF CRITICISM

While there is a general consensus that the critical theory of YAL is a “growing body” (Hill 2014 ix), there is also overwhelming agreement that a “body of criticism” is still needed (15)—the parallels between this “growing body of criticism” and the “growing body” of the adolescent are striking. Conventionally subsumed by children’s literature not only because it is larger, older, and more established but, crucially, because children’s literature is also securely positioned as part of a binary pair, there is a lack of critical engagement of YAL (see, also, Trites 1996b; Hunt 1996; Alsup 2010a; Coats 2011; Hill 2014). Thus, this thesis seeks to contribute to the developing body of YAL criticism by discussing developing bodies. This section is concerned with YAL’s inclusion under the umbrella term “children’s literature,” as well as with why such inclusion is impossible, while it also considers the kinds of engagement of

YAL—"book selection," "teaching" and critical theory, of which the first two are the most prevalent—that do occur (Hill 2014, xiv).

Citing Hunt (1996), Hill (2014) argues, "in terms of theoretical criticism, the field of YA literature has not yet separated itself from children's literature" (15), adding the caveat "new fields take time to develop serious criticism" (ibid.). While I disagree with this continual need to justify the state of YAL criticism, it was not until *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Young Adult Literature* by Roberta Seelinger Trites (2000) that both a sustained defining of the field and a categorical call for its difference from children's literature occurred. Moreover, Trites has been instrumental in the development of the field (see, also, 2001 and 2007). Thus, while Hunt (1996), and more widely the "special issue" of the *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* (Trites 1996a) in which the article exists, marks a pivotal point in the critical engagement of YAL, it was not until the new millennium that a sustained, coherent body of YAL criticism began to develop.

In terms of both the criticism of YAL that does exist as well as the tendency to place YAL under the umbrella term children's literature, Hunt's article is a particularly useful place to start, not just because it is included in that "special edition" of the *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* but also because of the way in which it addresses "why" there is a lack of critical engagement.³⁹ For which Hunt gives three reasons, young adult books tend to "date" quickly (5), "the theory that accompanies [them] is more likely to focus on social issues than on literary theory" (6), and finally, the "persistent connection between YA literature courses and high school certification [as in teacher training]" (8). While the final reason comes to bear below, there is, within the first two, a shared issue of temporality at play, one that speaks to the linear way in which adolescents are meant to progress out of adolescence, a

³⁹ In her introduction to the edition, Trites (1996b) suggests that it came about because of how "[a]t the 1995 Children's Literature Association conference [...] the paucity of theoretically orientated literary criticism analyzing adolescent literature" was noted. Given that many critics shared the concern, the edition sought to fill a gap (2).

notion that Mary Hilton and Maria Nikolajeva (2012) pick up in their focus on the endgame of adolescence.

For Hilton and Nikolajeva, the adolescent must “emerge” from adolescence as an adult, that is to say, possessing a unified, single, stable and heterosexual identity, according to dominant hegemonic paradigms. This discourse of emergence is prohibitive, especially as Hilton and Nikolajeva go as far as suggesting “adolescence” itself “implies a transition from deviation to norm” (13). This is the structural anomaly of adolescence, and it is one that concomitantly encompasses young adult literature. Moreover, this “deviation” sees YAL placed under the umbrella term children’s literature, as it “easier” to rationalise the literature within binary frameworks if it is simply an aspect of children’s literature. In other words, this chapter reads a structure of binary oppositions existing within Western culture, a structure that supersedes specific binary pairs in a favour of a paradigmatic use of binary oppositions to structure, organise and rationalise the world. It is this structure of binary thinking that this thesis refuses through engaging YAL’s liminality generally and the female body and its “instability” specifically.

This particular iteration of YAL as deviation is exemplified by the journals, in two ways. First, by how both the children’s literature journals, as well as several key children’s literature book series, have included YAL within their scope: especially, when, in terms of the journals, that inclusion occurs through a “special edition” (see, for example, Trites 1996a and Christenbury 1997). In being made “special,” these editions acknowledged YAL as a field of literature and of criticism, but in doing so in this way, they also named it a deviant aspect of children’s literature. There is a similar issue occurring with the publication of monographs that engage YAL (see, also, Waller 2009; Day, Green-Barteet, Montz 2014; Flanagan 2014). While on the surface (cover) these books appear to concern YAL, appearance immediately gives way to a situating within, what becomes, the wider field children’s literature. For example, *Technology and Identity in Young Adult Fiction* (Flanagan 2014) makes immediately explicit a concern with “Young Adult Fiction.” However, on the first page—prior even to the title page—the paratextual material situates the text within *Critical Approaches to Children’s Literature* (i, formatting original). “The

Series Editor's Forward" (Waller 2009) performs much the same function. In publishing these key works on YAL within children's literature series, the publishers effectively turn them into "steam-valves," at once giving the individual text approval and validity as distinct from children's literature, whilst also ensuring that, as a whole, they operate *within* the accepted framework (of binary oppositions).⁴⁰

However, the inclusion of YAL under the umbrella of children's literature is problematic because there is an elision of bodies that occurs with the conflation. The child and the adolescent are markedly different: a fundamental bodily instability that is absent from conceptions of childhood marks adolescence generally and female adolescence—through breast growth, the growth of pubic and underarm hair, the widening hips and menarche—particularly. Children's literature cannot take into account this instability as being-child elides the fundamental bodily instability of adolescence. This is an issue I have with *Adventures into Otherness: Child Metamorphs in Late Twentieth-Century Children's Literature* (Lassén-Seger 2006) as well as *Werewolves, Wings, and Other Weird Transformations: Fantastic Metamorphosis in Children's and Young Adult Fantasy Literature* (Chappell 2007), both of which should speak quite strongly to this thesis. Instead, their scope for reading instability is limited by their refusal to acknowledge YAL as separate and distinct from children's literature.

While focusing on children's literature and including YAL within that field is also a problem in Coats (2007), Bradford, McCallum, Mallan, Stephens

⁴⁰ William Bascom (1954) first identified this practice as one of his "Four Functions of Folklore." Bascom suggests,

folklore fulfills the important but often overlooked function of maintaining conformity to the accepted patterns of behavior [...] More than simply serving to validate or justify institutions, beliefs and attitudes, some forms of folklore are important as means of applying social pressure and exercising social control. (346)

Through a "steam-valve" function, folklore gives space to issues unacceptable within a particular culture, allowing them to be explored within an acceptable, that is, controllable way. The trickster figure often fulfills this steam-valve function, in his role as a disrupter of borders and boundaries.

(2008), Reynolds (2007), Wilkie-Stibbs (2002), and Jacques (2015), I draw out Lassén-Seger and Chappell because of their engagement with shape-shifting—metamorphosis in their terminology—as that concern relates closely to this thesis. However, these texts cannot give credence to the (bodily) instability of the adolescent and of adolescent literature because of their association with children’s literature. Moreover, neither text can take into account the liminality of adolescence, of which this bodily instability is one example. This very tension—between the required appearance of bodily stability in popular and media culture and the adolescent girl’s fundamentally unstable body—is the focus of my argument. YAL criticised under the umbrella term or, even, in conjunction with children’s literature, cannot take into account the peculiar relationship between adolescence and the body.

“Book selection,” “teaching,” and, to a lesser extent, critical theory mark the field of YAL studies today (Hill 2014, xiv), and while these areas offer unique perspectives on the field, there is often a slippage between the distinct areas. For example, “book selection” and “teaching” frequently overlap and engage one another, as once trained to teach—the goal of “teaching” focused criticism—teachers and librarians are often the front lines of recommending “best books,” the primary role of book selection research. This ambiguity within the field of study reflects the ambiguities that also pervade the category young adult (the adolescent) and YAL (the literature); there is often a slippage between the adolescent, the literature, and the criticism, as all three are intimately bound up in one another. In other words, the search for identity associated with adolescence is reflected in both the literature and the criticism, both in its concern and its preoccupation with its own identity as criticism. Moreover, this thesis is not specifically intended to recommend “best books” but in engaging alternative, positive images of living and being an adolescent female body, I implicitly suggest that the books under discussion are indeed “good books.” This ambiguity and slippage is a manifestation of liminality. Thus, it is through this liminality that I examine the field of YAL engagement.

Returning to the journals, there is an absence of publications dedicated to the critical engagement of the literature, as the YAL specific journals that do exist—*The ALAN Review*, *SIGNAL Journal*, *The Young Adult Library Services* and

the *Journal of Research on Libraries and Young Adults*—focus most predominantly on book selection and the teaching of young adult literature. *The ALAN Review*, for example, features “clip and file,” a section wholly dedicated to reviewing new YAL in most of its issues. This is not to say that these journals do not include critical theory; it is, rather, to demonstrate how their primary aims align more with book selection and education than with critical theory. Of the two, education stands as the most dominant strand, with book selection participating in its goals. In the West, at least, this is because the adolescent is presumed to be in, and in need of, education. Owing to this, it is impossible to extricate YAL from discourses of education. On this front, *Young Adult Literature and Adolescent Identity Across Cultures and Classrooms*, edited by Janet Alsup (2010b), is one recent and popular example of this vein of criticism.

This is also largely the work of, in the United States, the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) and the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English). For examples of works in this vein, see: Bucher and Hinton (2013); Cole (2008); Herz and Gallo (2005). While it is not a field that I am currently interested in or largely concerned with, it, while increasing the visibility of YAL (especially in calling for YAL’s use within classrooms) is a strand of engagement that most often remains in the “best books” vein of criticism, in that, it is concerned with what books are best suited for particular purposes and particular stages. This “best books” front is heavily bound up in the awarding of prizes—awards that typically go to realistic YA fiction, as I discuss below.

While most critics note the lack of YAL criticism and several have explored *why* it might be so lacking, I want to question Hunt’s (1996) belief that the “issue-driven” nature of YAL causes a difficulty in terms of the theorizing of YAL. I agree that criticism of YAL often focuses on “issues.” YAL is an “issues-based” literature, thus an issues-driven criticism of the literature logically follows, but I do not see this as detrimental to theorizing. Rather, I see it as contributing to the robust and growing body of criticism in highly relevant and specific ways. YAL is an incredibly topical literature, and in contemporary popular and media culture this has led, within the literature, to an increased turn to dystopias and to the posthuman, but this turn has not been at the

expense of a theoretical engagement of YAL, as Basu, Broad, and Hintz (2013); Flanagan (2014); Day, Green-Barteet, and Montz (2014) make clear. Through their look at the “issues” related to posthumanism and dystopias, they engage topics of the day, but as they do so through the lenses of, for example, feminism, postfeminism, semiotics, post-structuralism and postmodernism, there is no lack of literary theory. However, they also engage, for example, mythology, girlhood studies, cultural studies, science fiction studies, and herein lies, I feel, the difficulty: a critical theory of YAL does necessarily look like a critical theory of children’s or (adult) literature because YAL is different from those literatures, while, simultaneously, being like both of them. YAL’s liminality means that it demonstrates aspects of children’s literature *and* (adult) literature as well as features that are distinct from these fields, and this liminality must be addressed.

The refusal to recognise YAL’s liminality, and the consequential absence of theorising, is at the heart of this perceived lack of YAL theoretical criticism, and it is endemic to Karen Coats (2011) call for not just “a more robust critical conversation” but one that “treats YA lit as a destination, rather than as an in-between phenomenon” (317; see, also, Hunt 1996; Ostry 2004; Alsup 2010a; 2010b; Hill 2014). YAL is an in-between phenomenon, but this in-betweenness does not preclude treating YAL as a field in and of itself, though it does require the refusal of binary oppositions. In short, YAL criticism is still a growing body.⁴¹ However, rather than focusing so much on YAL as a “destination,” a theorizing of YAL that takes into liminality, and the concomitant relation between areas of concern, is required. Crucially, this is not at the expense of uniqueness. Rather, it is possible to conceive this liminality and relation as the very thing that makes YAL unique.⁴²

⁴¹ Of possible interest, Kaplan (2007), Cappella (2010), and Hill (2014) offer descriptions of the kinds of critical research taking place.

⁴² Battersby (1998) makes a similar argument in her concern with a feminist metaphysics that takes into account “fluidity” and the body.

[w]e need a metaphysics of fluidity and mobile relationships; not a metaphysics of fixity, or even of flexibility. However, that metaphysics

Mirrors Abound: YAL as an Ideological Framework

From the problematic, problem novels of the 1960s to the romances of the 1980s and current trends for dystopias, vampires and other paranormal creatures—alongside gritty truth and striking realism—the YA novel not only serves as cultural marker, an indication of the perceived shape of adolescence at any particular time (Hunt 1996), but it is also perceived as playing a critical role in the individual adolescent’s transition into an adult. In fact, Michael Cart (2008), speaking for the YALSA, suggests: YAL is “often described as ‘developmental’ [...] recogniz[ing] that young adults are beings in evolution, in search of self and identity; beings who are constantly growing and changing” (n.p.).⁴³ This notion of change is key: lacking clearly defined or easily definable parameters, the most common defining marker of adolescence is change itself (see, also, Baxter 2008; Hilton and Nikolajeva 2012), and it is this change, in the form of identity formation, that YAL prevalingly grapples with (see, also, Hunt 1986).

Thus, YAL paradigmatically concerns narratives of “coming of age,” and while there is divergence on *how* this engagement occurs, the addressing of transition, or the issues (drugs, dating, sex, friendship) potentially encountered within such transition, is the generally agreed upon marker of YAL (see, also, Trites 2000; 2007; Hill 2014). Koss and Teale (2009) suggest,

although YA novels do still focus on social issues, there has been a shift from the big event/coming-of-age stories to a more general focus on teens struggling to find themselves and dealing with typical teenage life. (567)

must also be able to explain how a subject might be scored by relationality into uniqueness. (7)

This is YAL. It is unique precisely because of its particular relationship to children’s and (adult) literature. I address Battersby’s work in more detail throughout.

⁴³ Since 1991, the YALSA has understood this individual to be someone between the ages of 12 and 18, a broad range that certainly includes many kinds of changes.

This reflects the ever-increasing focus of YAL on the “issues” facing adolescents. From sexual identities to friendship and dealing with loss or mental illness to being “normal,” YAL is a mercurial field of literature, ever-evolving because of its relationship to and with adolescents.⁴⁴

Within this, there is an underlying assumption that this literature performs, or at least has the potential to perform, a particular function in the life of “real” adolescents. As Cart (2008) states,

to see oneself in the pages of a young adult book is to receive the reassurance that one is not alone after all, not other, not alien but, instead, a viable part of a larger community of beings who share a common humanity. (n.p.)

In this way, the text serves as a mirror for the adolescent (see, also, Tatum 2009; Bodart 2006; Dail and Leonard 2011; DasGupta 2011). It offers a way of being in this world. Even the most obviously “for-pleasure” novel is expected to address in some way the adolescent’s *needs*—be they “real” or imagined.

In relation to the development of YAL—through the lens of Francis Pascal’s Sweet Valley High series (1983–2003)—Amy Pattee (2010) extends this reading by suggesting that early YAL novels “adhered to a recognizable formula that perpetuated dominant ideologies” (11). In one sense, Pattee’s claim concerns the lack of variation in early YAL, especially in terms of the mass-produced, often ghost-written, series. These series—Sweet Valley High (1983–2003), Nancy Drew (1930–2003), the Hardy Boys (1927–2005)—depend on a repetition of conflict and resolution for their structure, often with a “hook,” a small unresolved subplot or the promise of a new mystery, to keep readers reading.⁴⁵ Moreover, with the conflict serving as anything deemed

⁴⁴ This preoccupation with “normal” is peculiar, not least owing to the fact that two of the ten books nominated for the 2016 YA Book Prize concern being “normal” (“Shortlisted Books” 2016). See, in particular, *Am I Normal Yet* (Bourne 2015) and *The Art of Being Normal* (Williamson 2016).

⁴⁵ While outside of the scope of this thesis, it is worth noting that both the Nancy Drew series as well as the Hardy Boys series are still in print, as “reboot” series. For discussions of Nancy Drew see: Dyer and Romalov (1995) and Rehak (2006). For discussions of the Hardy Boys, see, Connelly (2008) and Greenwald

counter to dominant ideologies and the resolution always showing the wayward adolescent figure brought back in line with those ideologies, these stories perpetuate conservative ideals whilst also entrenching certain beliefs about the shape of adolescence, a notion that I develop throughout this chapter.

In this vein, one argument I make is that the adolescent is a “hailed” creature, in the Althusserian sense. Althusser (1971) suggests, “all ideology hails or *interpellates* concrete individuals as concrete subjects” (163, emphasis original). Ideology, or this hail, transforms individuals into subjects (Althusser uses recruits). This is particularly relevant to YAL, which, like children’s literature, addresses a specific subject. In this address, YAL (as ideology) names its intended audience “young adult,” and it interpellates that “young adult” as such. In other words, through the interpellative aspect of this hail, the individual addressed (the adolescent in the case of YAL) becomes the subject of the address. Her identity is (in)formed by the hail.

While I contend that children’s literature and YAL are different, they do share overlapping concerns, owing to YAL’s liminality. Both children’s literature and YAL rest on the premise of engaging a specific audience, and both name their intended audience. In a field of children’s literature criticism concerning this issue, *The Case of Peter Pan and the Impossibility of Children’s Literature* (Rose 1984) is the seminal text (see, also, Tucker 1981; Wall 1991; Lesnik-Oberstein 2004). It is also the work undertaken by the Graduate Centre for International Research in Childhood: Literature, Culture, Media (CIRCL), headed by Karín Lesnik-Oberstein at Reading University. However, as Rose, Lesnik-Oberstein and CIRCL as well as Peter Hunt, John Stephens, and Perry Nodelman—all stalwarts of children’s literature—ignore the adolescent in their work, this chapter shows my work, where pertinent, both in relation to, and diverging from, children’s literature critics and criticism.

Briefly, my divergence concerns a difference in perception of the “concrete individual” that Althusser discusses (1971, 163). For me, Rose and CIRCL lose the concreteness—the fleshy and physical—in their analysis, in

(2004), Greenwald also considers the Stratemeyer Syndicate, as does Billman (1986) and Johnson (1982) and (1993). Heiferman and Kismaric (1998) unites both Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys.

favour of a wholly discursively produced child. While such a claim might be possible in terms of the child—though, I think not—the adolescent is a particularly embodied creature, and, as I discuss in detail below, the body must be taken into account. For my argument, YAL creates and validates the very group that it is constructed as being *for*, yet, without physical, material adolescent beings, the field could not exist. There is a complex relationship between the fleshy, physical adolescent and discursive conceptions of that creature just as there is a complex relationship between the fleshy, physical adolescent and YAL, a particular narrative of adolescence. It is this relationship that the remainder of this chapter explores.

For now, YAL is a literature that is particularly bound up in creating the very subject it purports to address; it establishes its own ideal adolescent, and in so doing, it serves as an “Ideological State Apparatus”—or an ideology—and it provides a discursively and culturally specific image of adolescence (Althusser 1971). As Joanna Croft (1994) suggests, in her PhD thesis *Adolescence and Writing: Locating the Borderline*, “the adolescent subject is interpellated as the addressee (and source) of a unique form of narrative” (12). While Croft is specifically referring to the adolescent diaries with which she is concerned, the same kind of relationship holds true in relation to adolescence as a discursively produced state of being and YAL as a discourse participating in that constructing. Essentially, adolescence and YAL exist because of, and through, each other, and in this way, YAL serves as an ideological framework that hails adolescents outside the text through narratives concerning adolescents within the text.

Within this frame of interpellation, realism is most often praised as the genre best suited to this interpellative task—because it more readily represents the world in which the adolescent exists and is therefore “better” able to assist them in the developmental tasks of the stage. It is, in many ways, a truth claim: if literature, or an image, mimetically reproduces the reality with which it is concerned, it is somehow more truthful, more accurate. Yet, I often find realistic YAL ineffective, especially when it aims, in sometimes quite a didactic manner, to address an adolescent’s needs. Still, in popular and media culture, mimetic representation (realistic literature) dominates conceptions of what is best for

adolescents. It is a fact made evident by the overwhelming success of realistic YAL at winning awards—this is also the “book selection” front of the tripartite engagement of YAL.

Administered by the YALSA, the Michael L. Printz, Margaret A. Edwards and William C. Morris awards are three of the most prominent specifically in terms of YAL. The Printz is the weightiest. Recognising the “best book written for teens, based entirely on its literary merit,” the Printz has, with little deviation, gone to realistic YAL (“The Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature” 2016). The deviation: a paranormal romance, *Midwinterblood* (Sedgwick 2011), won in 2014, and *Bone Gap* (Ruby 2015), which employs magical realism (a style that is fantastical in scope, though, as the name suggests, grounded in realism), won in 2016. While these two texts push the boundaries of realism, they are more mainstream than sub or counter-cultural. With the Edwards Award, fantasy and fantasy authors, have fared better: Tamora Pierce (2013), Susan Cooper (2012), Sir Terry Pratchett (2011), Orson Scott Card (2008), Ursula K. Le Quin (2005), Anne McCaffrey (1999) and Madeleine L’Engle (1998)—all fantasy authors—have each won, in the noted year. The Edwards award recognises a lifetime contribution to YAL, suggesting that fantasy requires a body of work before it is worth recognition?

Fantasy and Realism: How Very Different Are They?

In *Fantasy and Mimesis*, Kathryn Hume (1984) argues that since “Plato and Aristotle” most “western critical theory [...] ha[s] assumed mimetic representation to be the essential relationship between text and the real world” (5). Mimetic representation is about appealing to reality, to the “truth” associated with the “real,” and in so being realistic literature, literature that is mimetic in its approach to reality, is posited as more valuable and as “better” at, in terms of YAL, assisting the adolescent through the perilous period of transition. This being “better” is about the assumed one-to-one relation—as a method of binary systems—between the “real” and that which is *mimetically* represented. Given this, fantasy and reality are posited as existing on opposing ends of a spectrum, as constituting a binary opposition. However, this section

asks: how very different are realistic and fantasy literatures, as both are (re)presentations of this thing, consensually agreed to be, “reality.”

The very concept of realistic literature, or of discussing the “real” in literature, “constitutes,” as Sue Walsh (2013) suggests,

a claim as to the nature of reality, which involves an assumption about its pre- or extra-discursive existence that can then be re-presented in language with greater or lesser accuracy. (4)

The real is posited as prior to, or outside of, language. Yet, at the same time, realistic literature rests on the premise that this real can be “re-presented in language” (ibid.). As fantasy, my key texts—and the cross-dressing, Lunar “glamours,” bleeding, shape-shifting, and being cyborg contained therein—make no claims of being real or of offering “real” examples of the adolescent female body. They do not claim to mimetically reproduce any given reality; rather, they create realities, and this interruption in the one-to-one relationship associated with realism and with mimetic representation is crucial for this fracture allows for alternative images of living and being a girl.

Owing to the prioritising of mimetic representation and of realistic literature, there is no critical theory of mythopoeic YA fantasy. In this way, I also pick up precisely where Hilton and Nikolajeva (2012) stop.

Moving beyond the argument and scope of this book to the historical novel, fantasy, dystopia, and horror for teenagers, each in its own ways offers excellent possibilities for creating situations in which young people’s dilemmas can be represented and tested. (15)

Chapter Two delineates these, among other, possibilities. In short, there is criticism on YAL. There is criticism on myth, and even on mythic fantasy literatures, but there is no criticism on mythopoeic YA fantasy—a mythic, fantasy literature that is YAL. It is for this reason that Chapter One and Chapter Two work together to establish this thesis’s field of concern.

Finally, Walsh’s suggestion also indicates the binary opposition between discourse (language) and the pre- or extra-discursive (often posited as the “real”), a tricky opposition that is under scrutiny in Chapter Four’s concern with discourse and representation. Briefly, it is an opposition that, in Lacanian terms,

encompasses a tension between the registers of the Real (woman, body, pre-discourse) and the Symbolic (man, mind, discourse) (Lacan 2001). Mimetic representation attempts to overcome this tension by reproducing the real, an issue central to why I find realistic YAL questionable. Mimetic representation—offered by realistic YAL and, as I discuss in Chapter Three, by the selfie—appears to offer a stable and secure means of representation because it *looks* like the thing it is meant to represent—the real or the self, in my above examples. Thus, in the twenty-first century, realistic fiction is extolled as a vein of writing particularly relevant to adolescents and to the “challenging” issues of transition, from child to adult, that they face, because it is held to be the most like the reality faced by adolescents, except when it becomes overwhelmingly didactic.

This didacticism is one of the faults of “problem novels,” a genre of YAL that, while offering readers the “gritty realism” that formulaic series (Sweet Valley High and Nancy Drew) lacked, quickly became farcical in its dedication to the “problems” potentially faced by adolescents: drugs, alcohol, (unplanned) pregnancy, or abuse.⁴⁶ Thus, while *The Outsiders* (Hinton 1967), *The Pigman* (Zindel 1968) and *The Chocolate War* (Cormier 1974) stand as both stalwarts of YAL and as paragons of the problem novel, the genre itself is hugely controversial, as *Go Ask Alice* (Anonymous 1971) makes explicit. Written in a diary format in order to heighten its appeal to the real, *Go Ask Alice* is unerringly *about* drugs and the havoc they wreak. “Showing” the diarist’s downward spiral into drugs (after an unwitting experience of LSD), *Go Ask Alice* not only unites Croft’s (1994) reading of adolescent diaries with YAL, but it also reflects the notion that Western adolescence is perceived as a period in which individuals—especially girls—are “at risk.” Moreover, on a visit to the United States in September of 2015, I discovered that *Go Ask Alice* is, at time of writing, enjoying a renewed period of popularity, with the brooding black cover of the 2006 re-release populating many bookstore shelves. The question is: what does the

⁴⁶ For a history of the problem novel, see, Cart (2010a), and for a more positive analysis see Strum and Michel (2009).

continued popularity of such an iconic, yet contentious, text say about the perceived shape of adolescence, and the adolescent, in 2016?

While being an issues-based literature is not in itself problematic, the insistence on realism at the expense of other ways of viewing the world is limiting. It also establishes a binary opposition—an opposition that I now want to unpick, as doing so both makes a space for fantasy literature while also offering a framework for how this thesis approaches such oppositions more generally. In this vein, C.W. Sullivan (1992) explores this binary positioning of realism/fantasy, noting that the “real and the not-real (or fantastic) have been mutually exclusive terms” since the seventeenth century and the advent of science (98). On opposing sides of this thing called reality, there seem to exist two positions: mimetic representation (real) and fantasy (not-real). Or, as Hume (1984) further notes, “literature is the product of two impulses. These are *mimesis*, felt as the desire to imitate [...] and *fantasy*, the desire to change givens and alter reality” (20). Crucially, reality is included both between, and within, the two positions—one repeats a given reality while the other potentially alters it. While reality and mimetically representing that reality have been the predominant strain of literature for a great portion of Western history, there are, according to this argument, two ways of (re)presenting reality within the text: reality (mimetic representation) *and* fantasy (fantastic departure). Furthermore, these two kinds of literature, rather than existing separately, seem to reside on opposing ends of a spectrum, with any given text sitting, usually, closer to one than the other.

Thus, I read the relation between realistic and fantasy literatures as one of continuum and not opposition, a point Dawan Coombs (2013) makes through a debate concerning the perceived mutually exclusive nature of nonfiction and fiction in the classroom when she calls for the same relationship between those genres as I am calling for between realism and fantasy. Moreover, she does so in terms of YAL. Coombs insists “instead of placing fiction and nonfiction in curricular competition,” as educational standards do, “symbiotic relationships allow the reading of one form to support and complement the reading of the other” (7). Speaking to liminality, this symbiotic relationship between that which is traditionally perceived as binarily opposed is crucial to this thesis. It

also demonstrates the benefits of liminality in terms of education: engaging the symbiotic relationships between oppositional literatures allows for an enriched and more nuanced understanding (support and complement).

Finally, nonfiction literature is a rising star with YAL (see, also, Cart 2010b), and it exemplifies the elevating of realistic literature that I have been describing, as it is *about* “provid[ing] the facts” it is the most mimetic in appeal (182). Nonfiction literature sits firmly at the realistic end of the spectrum, even more “real” than realistic fiction. Yet, even with this nonfiction literature, there is a space between the thing represented and its representation, as Cart (2010b) suggests, “when handled expertly, the result [of nonfiction] is a compelling narrative that offers the power of story without sacrificing any of the authenticity of fact” (183). Handled expertly is the issue: to be handled, expertly or not, indicates shaping; it indicates a particular view. As Alexander (1968) claims “The most uncompromisingly [...] naturalistic novel is still a manipulation of reality,” and non-fiction is not immune to this manipulation (382; see, also, Yep 1978 and White 2010).

Realism is a perspective; it just happens to *align* with the dominant. Fantasy is also a perspective; it just happens to *depart* from the dominant. They are both, however, perspectives. In other words and as Hume (1984) contends, “fantasy is any departure from consensus reality” (21). Consensus indicates the role of perspective in our conception of reality, an idea that Yep (1978) further develops, stating: “we must distinguish between our sense of reality and reality itself; for our sense of reality is by necessity a simplification of the complex world about us” (n.p.), Yep indicates the constructedness of reality. He draws attention to the role of perspective. Thus, “reality,” as it is generally meant, is more aptly our “social consensus about our world” (n.p.). The reality that we daily experience and hold to be true is our—consensually agreed as “real”—reality.⁴⁷ If this is case, exactly how different are fantasy and reality?

* * *

⁴⁷ For a discussion of “consensus culture,” see, Jenkins (2006, 236). For a further discussion of “consensus reality” see, Hume (1984, xi and 21).

YAL is a field of literature marked by a concern with identity formation—with the adolescents it hails achieving a secure, stable adult-identity, and it is a concern that has permeated the criticism since even before the crystallisation of focus offered by Trites (2000) (see, for example Hunt 1986). However, a focus on identity formation is limiting, primarily because identity formation remains tied to hegemonic goals and values. Embodied subjectivities, however, offer a means of conceiving of the self not only in relation to the body but also in relation to others, and in this frame, YAL criticism concerning the posthuman is a particularly verdant field, one also relevant to this thesis owing to Cinder's cybernetic body in *The Lunar Chronicles* (Meyer 2012–2015).

In this frame, Victoria Flanagan's *Technology and Identity in Young Adult Fiction: The Posthuman Subject* (2014) alongside "Girls Parts: The Female Body, Subjectivity and Technology in Posthuman Young Adult Fiction" (2011) are preeminent. Focusing in the article on three YA texts—*Uglies* by Scott Westerfield (2005), *The Adoration of Jenna Fox* by Mary E. Pearson (2008) and the short story "Anda's Game" by Cory Doctorow (2008)—Flanagan (2011) argues that futuristic YA fantasy "rejects the idea of mind/body separation, highlighting the integral role of the body in constructing subjectivity" (42). Vitally, it performs this rejection by disrupting the relationship between mind and body, offering in its place "mutation, variation and becoming," as Myra Seaman (2007, 247) argues. This is particularly imperative for adolescent girls, who are, within the hegemonic discursive fantasy, constructed as both more corporeal than their boy counterparts and who are yet, simultaneously, told to disavow that corporeality through the silencing of the body and its processes.

Furthermore, Flanagan (2011) stresses,

coming to terms with a body that may not fit within [...] [established] perimeters is often a vital aspect of maturation within representations of adolescent femininity in young adult (YA) fiction. (40)

While this is, or should be, a vital aspect of all YAL, it is a task that mythopoeic YA fantasy, alongside Flanagan's futuristic fantasy, undertakes exceedingly well. The cross-dressing, "glamoured," menstruating, shape-shifting, and cybernetic

bodies available within these literatures are bodies that not only refuse to stay within established parameters, but they explicitly demonstrate the body as comprised of multiplicity and change. In so being, they allow for an exploration of an embodied subjectivity that does not insist upon the body's silencing. Such a conceiving of subjectivity is imperative to female adolescence because of the biological determinism that conflates her with her body. The adolescent female cannot be separated from the body(ily processes) marking her as adolescent, no matter how much the discursive rendering of Western popular and media culture wishes to see it suppressed and contained within a tiny frame. Thus, an embodied subjectivity—one taking into account multiplicity, difference and change—is imperative if she is to achieve agency. In other words, poststructuralism and posthumanism have opened an interrogation into the myth of the stable and unified identity, and this thesis utilizes that position, especially emphasis on “mutation, variation and becoming” (Seaman 2007, 247).

Thus, Trites argues that YAL is not simply concerned with identity formation, but it is marked—and for Trites defined—by narrations of the adolescent coming to terms with discourses of power, in a Foucauldian sense. This literature is about, as Trites (2000) argues in *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature*, how “adolescent protagonists [...] strive to understand their own power by struggling with the various institutions in their lives” (8).⁴⁸ Thus, for Trites, it is not simply that YAL is marked by identity formation; it is, rather, that narrations of identity formation take place in relation to social discourses of power. While her reading is sometimes dated—YAL is a quickly evolving field of literature and a lot has changed in fifteen years—her claim that YAL is defined by “*how* social power is deployed during the course of the narrative” is pivotal (2, my emphasis).

In one respect, it is so because of the ramifications such a claim has for conceiving the body. Trites' argument is a Foucauldian reading of power, and as such it has a particular relevance—despite Foucault's omission of a nuanced, in

⁴⁸ June Pulliman (2014) uses Trites' definition of adolescent literature in her reading of monstrous bodies in YA horror.

terms of sexual difference, discourse of power (see, also, Braidotti 1991)—to adolescent females. Power is, for Foucault, played out on the body, albeit a body that is by default male. Still, this body is, as Lois McNay (1998) argues in *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self*, “the point where power relations are manifest in their most concrete form” (16). Thus while Foucault may not have taken into account a female body—in relation to *how* discourses of power are manifest on that body—his omission does not preclude others from doing so, arguably McNay’s purpose. This is key for my reading: if the female adolescent is, as I have argued, particularly embodied; if YAL is a field of literature particularly marked by discourses of power, and if discourses of power are focused on the body, then an embodied subjectivity is essential to YAL that concerns and hails adolescent girls. In short, I suggest it is not identity formation that marks—at least—this vein of YAL but subjectivity.

For this reason, McCallum (1999) is useful, given her focus on subjectivity.⁴⁹ For McCallum, subjectivity is the

sense of personal identity an individual has of her/his self as distinct from other selves, as occupying a position within society and in relation to their selves, and as being capable of deliberate thought and action. (3)

Thus, it is a term encompassing identity formation while also bringing the social position of the individual—and such a positioning’s impact on identity—to bear on that process. McCallum further argues that subjectivity, as a notion, is intrinsic to YAL because YAL and subjectivity are concerned with the same things: “relationships between the self and others” (3) and “explorations of relationships between individuals and the world, society or the past” (3). Thus subjectivity offers not just the opportunity to explore the self’s relation to social discourses, but as social discourses are discourses of power and power is intrinsically concerned with the body, it also allows for an inclusion of the body within the conceptualizing of the self.

⁴⁹ McCallum does problematically conflate children’s and young adult literature, to such an extent that Hill (2014) considers it a study of children’s literature, not YAL.

If the adolescent girl is to be conceived as a self not beholden to or limited by her body, then engaging the body and its presentation within YAL is essential. Moreover, and as Flanagan (2011; 2014) argues, it is essential to engage bodies that do not align with the ideal body of popular and media culture because bodies of difference offer alternatives to that hegemonic fantasy of perfection. Thus, I also diverge from Lassén-Seger's (2006) because I am specifically concerned with the potential of the logically created Secondary World for making bodily instability acceptable, if not also normal. Lassén-Seger is concerned with how "the real [...] clash[es] with the fantastic [metamorphosis]" in realistic fiction (7). I am not interested in clashes, rather, I am interested in the possibility inherent within this space. I am interested how positive engagements of the body allow for the fleshy, physical body—that changes and that is lumpy and bumpy—to be reconceptualised as normal and as part of one's self, not as something to be beholden to or limited by.

I explore these bodies as they are made available within the discursive space of mythopoeic YA fantasy because of the prospects of this literature, as Pierce (1993) discusses,

Fantasy, along with science fiction, is a literature of *possibilities*. It opens the door to the realm of 'What If,' challenging readers to see beyond the concrete universe and to envision other ways of living and alternative mindsets. Everything in speculative universes, and by association the real world, is mutable. Intelligent readers will come to relate the questions raised in these books to their own lives. (50, emphasis original)

In its fantastical departure from "consensus reality" (Hume 1984, 21), mythopoeic YA fantasy is a literature of potential, and it is the potential of alternative frameworks for living and being a body with which I am interested. In other words, these texts tread a shared territory with popular and media culture as both are concerned with the adolescent female body, but mythopoeic YA fantasy—because of the potentiality of fantasy—maps the shapes and contours of that body differently.

CHAPTER TWO

MYTHOPOEIC YA FANTASY: FROM KNIGHTS IN SHINING ARMOUR TO A CYBORGIAN CINDERELLA

While there is wealth of YA fantasy literature available to adolescents today, I am interested in a very specific vein of this genre, one that I term mythopoeic YA fantasy. It is a Tolkienian inspired vein of fantasy, with “high fantasy” as its closest kin (Sullivan 1992; Alexander 1971). In other words, it is not just “speculative fiction,” the amorphous category into which Cart (2010a) places fantasy, science fiction, dystopias and the “paranormal,” because they all have fantastical elements (101–104). Yes, mythopoeic YA fantasy is a part of this wider genre, but it is also a genre in its own right. It is a vein of fantasy, more clearly than any other, demonstrating a tie to traditional mythic narratives, including myths, legends, and folktales. In short, the stories shared by cultural groups that not only establish the world and its order but that also chart expected behaviours, a function that myths perform on a religious or sacred scale (possibly including multiple geographic groups) (Eliade 1959), and one that legends and folktales fulfil on a more local level, expressing the fears and concerns—while also demonstrating appropriate responses—of a particular group (Malinowski 1926; Bascom 1954). Participating in this kind of cultural process, mythopoeic YA fantasy—that is also written by women and for adolescent girls—offers a particular space in which hegemonic discourses of perfection may be disrupted and in which new kinds of behaviours may be charted.

In one sense, this chapter is about establishing a difference between popular YAL that merely recapitulates the discourses of popular and media culture and a vein of YA fantasy, represented by Pierce’s *Tortall* books and Meyer’s *Lunar Chronicles*, that, though always in relation to those discourses, offers alternative images of living and being an adolescent female body. In other words, while the apocalyptically popular *The Twilight Saga* (Meyer 2005–2008) and *The Hunger Games* (Collins 2008–2010) are also examples of speculative fiction, they operate in their own specific genres within the wider field. They are also hegemonic in nature. Thus, while they too engage the body,

they overwhelmingly offer “pop culture” bodies that recapitulate the discourses of that space: Bella and Katniss, respectively, meet—sometimes exceed—hegemonic ideals of feminine appearance; they do not contest those ideals. Pierce and Meyer’s texts engage the body because they exist within a discursive space that is excessively preoccupied with the body, but they engage that body differently because they are outside of the mainstream, in terms of both popular and media culture as well as popular fantasy. In other words, mythopoeic YA fantasy is, as much as anything, about offering an alternative discursive space—the Secondary World—in which bodily instability becomes not just possible but also empowering.

This chapter is framed by a reading of Cinderella: the fairytale figure, the Disney Princess, and Cinder (Meyer’s cyborgian Cinderella).⁵⁰ Cinder(ella) speaks to all the narrative threads with which I am interested. It speaks to myth, as fairytale is a part of the mythic tradition; popular and media culture, as Disney’s Cinderella articulates a feminine identity that is of contemporary hegemonic discourse; and, mythopoeic YA fantasy, as Cinder is a female hero, despite—and because of—her fragmented body. Moreover, Cinder’s engagement with narratives of self unites mythopoeic YA fantasy and popular and media culture particularly well, in that, while cyborgs do not yet exist, the relationship between girls and technology is ever-increasing, to such an extent that Warfield (2014b) describes adolescent girls as “hyper-mediated” or “plugged in” (n.p). Underpinning this reading is the notion, offered by Linda Parsons (2004) that fairy tales provide children (readers or viewers) with “positions to occupy” (136). In other words, fairy tales, and their vestiges, offer frameworks for gendered behaviour, and while it is impossible to account for every “taking up” of such positions, it is possible to read the positions on offer and to explore their implications on, and for, the particular cultural and

⁵⁰ Fittingly, the state of “being cyborg” is linguistically difficult to articulate. I use “cyborgian” to describe the state of being cyborg. Taking guidance from Meyer (2012), I also use “cybernetic,” in relation to the cyborgian creature. Though this is employed to describe the makeup of “being cyborg,” or “cyborgian”—one’s “cybernetic makeup” (81), as it were.

discursive spaces within which they sit.⁵¹ Thus, using the characters Cinderella and Cinder as examples, I am concerned with the feminine identities offered by these iterations of the “Cinderella” figure, the fairy tale heroine who links these two very different incarnations. It is through these varying articulations of the Cinderella figure that I frame a transition from Cinderella (a hegemonic feminine identity) to Cinder (a shero).⁵²

Finally, mythopoeic YA fantasy is a fantasy literature for adolescents (though read more widely) that employs a mythopoeic mind-set and demonstrates mythopoeic features, such as world building, female heroes, and magic. It is a genre of writing that existed long before Tolkien’s creation of Middle-Earth although it experienced a sort of cohesion with that world. Thus, this chapter is concerned with establishing just what this mythopoeic YA fantasy encompasses in terms of the mind-set it employs, the worlds it creates, and the heroes it features. It also considers the tension between where this fantasy began—with, for example, traditional myth and Tolkien—and where it is today—through the work of Pierce and Meyer, for instance—and it does so in order to establish the discursive space encompassing not only Pierce’s and Meyer’s fantasy but to also further establish a framework for my reading of that fantasy.

THE HERO

I mean to shew that ‘Hero-worship *never ceases*,’ that it is at bottom the main or only kind of worship.
(Carlyle [1840] 2013, n.p., emphasis original)

⁵¹ It is worth noting that Parsons borrows “positions to occupy” from Walkerdine (1984), and while it is Parsons’ use with which I am most interested, Walkerdine is concerned with the psychoanalytical implications of such positions in terms of the young girl’s insertion into romantic heterosexuality, which is also relevant.

⁵² The term “sheroes” arises from the name given to female heroes on a discussion board Pierce co-founded with children’s and YA author Meg Cabot in 2003, as I am concerned with Pierce’s fantasy the use of her term, sheroes, for female heroes seems appropriate (“About Us” 2016).

Defined by famous (white) men as being about famous (white) men, the hero journey is *his*-story, and it is a prolific one. It is the story of world-creating, of world-shaping, and of control. Furthermore, it narrates the interface. It narrates the boundary between what is known and what has not yet been discovered (or claimed). In this way, the hero story is also concerned with liminality, with narrating the blank spaces and with transforming chaos into cosmos, a task it undertakes through the figure of the hero: Gilgamesh, Odysseus, Beowulf, Sir Gawain and his Green Knight, Aragorn son of Arathorn, Luke Skywalker. Through this hero, the same story is repeatedly told: the story of *his* domination over some evil foe in order to win *her* hand in marriage, and it is with this hero and his journey—because the two cannot be torn asunder—that my reading of mythopoeic YA fantasy begins. This first section is, in many ways, a continuation—through the specific lens of the hero paradigm—of the silencing I read above in relation to the adolescent girl and her body. In other words, by exploring how hegemonic discourse is but mythic ideals in modern shapes, the following section demonstrates the pervasiveness of this silencing.

Thus, “hero pattern” research, a comparing of heroes and journeys across stories in order to ascertain the core features of both, is the most useful lens for my current purpose of establishing just who, or what, the hero is, in order to consider how the *shero* is different (Dundes 1990, 43). One of the earliest works in this vein of hero studies is Otto Rank’s ([1909] 1959) *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*. First published in German in 1909 (translated to English in 1914), Rank’s pattern is concerned with “myth formation and its tendency” (85), as it arises, he argues, within the “family drama”—Rank relies quite heavily on the work of Freud in his understanding of the hero. For Rank, it is the child’s desire (need) to move on from the authority of the parents that in turn “oblige[s] the hero to sever his family relations” (66). In other words, through the lens of psychoanalysis, Rank shows how myth articulates “identical motive forces [to those of the family drama], only in delicately shaded manifestations” (ibid.). Myth is the private family drama, the child severing ties from his parental home in order to establish his own, made manifest across cultures and throughout history. Myth’s hero story is also the story of adolescence (see, also, Hourhian 1997; Proukou 2005).

While Rank's reading of the hero is useful for its relating the hero pattern to the family drama and thus, for my purposes, to the ritual transference that is adolescence, the American mythologist Joseph Campbell, and, especially, his *Hero with a Thousand Faces* ([1949] 1973), is now most synonymous with hero studies. Campbell ([1949] 1973) brings together the motifs appearing in "mythological hero stories" from around the world. Through "the Orient [...] the Greeks [...] and in the [...] legends of the Bible" (35), Campbell compares mythic stories in order to focus on the hero and his function, a function that he believes to be largely psychological (see, also, 1968). Campbell's most well-known contribution to this field of hero studies is the monomyth—the basic pattern of separation-initiation-return—that provides the framework for hero stories, while also paralleling the linear, hegemonic thrust of adolescent development (see, also, Lesko 1996; Proukou 2005). In more detail, Campbell ([1949] 1973) suggests,

[t]he hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. (35)

This journey, typically undertaken by the young man in peak health and form, makes the hero. Thus, while the hero dominates conceptions of myth—Northrop Frye (1957) even has the figure defining literature at large—it is his journey, the hero's actions, that always take precedence within these constructions, and it is this insistence on the hero's journey that is both troublesome and potentially useful.⁵³

The unyielding repetition of the pattern—a pattern that insists upon *his* dominance—is problematic, and it is an issue that children's literature specialist Margery Hourihan (1997) takes up at length in *Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature*. For Hourihan, myth is always about (his) superiority and (his) success. With this essential thread of

⁵³ Demonstrating a diverse interest in heroes, Valdimir Propp (1958) offers a hero pattern through the language of folktales, also worth noting that his text was first published in Russian in 1928.

domination, these stories provide order and are, more or less, about the naturalisation of (his) power; the establishing of hegemonic discourse, in my argument. It is understood, though often unstated, that superiority, success and power are *his* to gain—not hers or, even, theirs. Furthermore, in requiring the hero to be male and in pitting him against monsters, the journey is, as Hourihan argues, constructed around a “conceptual centre” of binary oppositions (for example, man/monster, male/female, good/evil, active/passive and us/them) that speak to the maintenance of the status quo and that demonstrates the expansive nature of the structure of binary oppositions underpinning contemporary Western culture’s understanding the world. (15). Thus, and as Rank illustrates, the hero’s journey is essentially about the perpetuation of patriarchy (status quo) through the slaying of monsters and through marriage. Yet, who is the hero, the figure of this journey?

The figure of the hero is a topic to which Hourihan (1997) devotes an entire chapter. Within this, she discusses seven aspects of the hero: “race” (58), “class and mastery” (62), “gender” (68), “age” (72), “relationships” (76), “rationality” (88), and “action and violence” (96). As the last three are more concerned with his journey, it is on the first four that I focus. For Hourihan, these are, and I agree, the defining characteristics of the hero. Although, I suggest one more: bodily stability. Bodily stability is a characteristic that not only underscores each of Hourihan’s characteristics, including those more focused on his journey, but it is also an assumption that underscores all conceptions of the conventional hero, despite a lack of acknowledgement.

Beginning by arguing that the “hero is white” (58), Hourihan suggests not that the hero is always, or is traditionally, white, but, rather, that he is fundamentally white. This whiteness establishes—in terms of race—not only the hero’s “normal” body colour, but it also offers a kind of stability, at least in terms of appearance: the hero’s skin colour does not change. He always appears white, thus, he is white.⁵⁴ Class and mastery directly engage this whiteness, by

⁵⁴ Ursula Le Guin specifically, and frequently, cites race as one of the issues she directly engages in her work: Ged, the hero of *The Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), is dark-skinned, despite a white washing of him on book covers (see, also, Le Guin

also insisting that (because of his skin colour) the hero exists in an elevated position. This characteristic stems from the “god-touched” aspect of mythic patterns,⁵⁵ and it places him—even before the journey begins—in a position of some authority. As Hourihan suggests, this characteristic speaks to the hierarchies that are embedded within the hero story, and as “hierarchies are images of order,” the hero embodies order, another kind of stability (65). With gender, while Hourihan suggests, “heroes are traditionally male and the hero myth inscribes male dominance and the primacy of male enterprises” (68). I contend that in terms of both the archetypal hero as well as the paradigm of *being*-hero, the hero *is* male—just as much as he *is* white. Age is Hourihan’s final marker that specifically focuses on the heroic figure, and it is a point particularly relevant to both my reading of the adolescent female (body) as well as YAL.

While the hero is generally considered to be youthful, Hourihan argues, “the archetypal hero is not merely young, he is essentially adolescent” (74), overtly linking this reading of the hero to my reading of adolescence and YAL in the previous chapter. The hero journey is ideally suited to YAL, a point that Katherine Proukou (2005) makes. Linking the pattern represented in the ritual transference of adolescence (child–adolescent–adult) with that of myth (separation–initiation–return) and specifically referencing Campbell’s patterning in the process, Proukou suggests that the two are largely interchangeable. For example,

because everyone can identify with the transformational ‘call’ of adolescence and its demands, it is a universal link to its mythological association with the hero’s call, its tests and wisdom-based rewards, as well as to psychological associations with transformations of knowing. (63)

1993). This white washing of book covers also frequents YAL (see, for example, Schutte 2012).

⁵⁵ Rank ([1909] 1914) first suggested that the hero is “child of distinguished parents” (65) and it was with Lord Raglan’s (1936) expansion of Rank’s project (taking the “hero” markers from twelve to twenty-two) that “hero reputed to be the son of a god” entered the pattern at number five. For a copy of Lord Raglan’s “The Hero Pattern,” see, also, Raglan (1934).

While I agree with Proukou's argument that there is a particular correlation between adolescence and the hero journey, I am hesitant to accept the universal nature of the claim. For one, such universalising elides the difference between male and female adolescence, not to forget that adolescence is a discursive construction, and, as such, it is rendered within particular discursive, that is historical and cultural, spaces (see, also, Lesko 1996). I am concerned, as is Proukou, with a Western construction in which my reading of myth is embedded, but I am not concerned with that construction in order to refuse other possible manifestations. I am concerned with the West because of the dominant nature, thanks to globalization and Internet technologies, of its paradigms, as well as because Pierce and Meyer are situated within a Western tradition,⁵⁶ though this does not foreclose the possibility of non-Western engagements of this topic. Rather, I open a space through which such could be studied. Finally, this "youthfulness," or adolescence, also speaks to the ideal body of the West's popular and media culture: the ideal body of that space is also adolescent, that is to say, youthful—not to mention, male.

While bodily stability underscores each of Hourihan's markers of the heroic figure, it is a characteristic that she does not explicitly engage—as is the case for most critics. The closest is her argument that "the hero's masculinity is his assertion of control over himself, his environment, his world" (69), a reading that echoes the hegemonic expectations of the adolescent girl in popular and media culture. This stability is pervasive, and I believe that bodily stability is not only a characteristic of the hero but that it is also, at once, the most required while also the least discussed—because of its ubiquity. The hero *is* bodily wholeness, and this, coupled with how all other characteristics describe that wholeness, means it need not be discussed. Yet, it is the very absence of discussion that perpetuates both the conceptual centre of binary oppositions (that refuse the adolescent girl) as well as the limiting dependence on bodily wholeness and stability, as a symptom of that conceptual centre. Within this frame, the adolescent girl cannot be hero, despite adolescence's tie to the hero

⁵⁶ For a non-Western view on the Eurocentric character of myth and fantasy, see, Deepa (2009) and Dharmadhikari (2009), which is an article developed from the original blog post.

journey. The adolescent girl cannot be hero because she is perceived as a shape-shifting creature, in a way that her male counterparts are not.

This dependence on bodily stability is made particularly evident by the few instances of bodily instability that do appear in traditional hero narratives. For when bodily instability does appear, it does so either to question the hero's very being-hero or to signal his death. In terms of the first, Catherine Batt (1994) argues that heroic injury is "part of a general strategy that uses the body as the focus for issues of integrity," in relation to Sir Thomas Malory's knights (270). For example, Batt specifically argues that in Malory's "Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney," an injury to the thigh represents "sexual activity [that] constitutes a moral transgression" on the part of Sir Gareth (270). Bodily instability signals that the hero is no longer acting heroically. Thus, he is not, in that moment of action, hero. Furthermore and through synecdoche, bodily instability comes to represent not-hero. Bodily instability ensures that the hero is bodily stability.

Within traditional literature, injury also signifies the hero's end. Beowulf, the heroic deliverer of King Hrothgar's halls from the terror of the monstrous Grendel, is never injured in his battles with that foe. He is never injured—until, in old age and in meeting the dragon—it is his time to die.

Beowulf was foiled
of a glorious victory. The glittering sword,
infallible before that day,
failed when he unsheathed it, as it never should have.
For the Son of Ecgtheow, it was no easy thing
to have to give ground like that and go
unwillingly to inhabit another home
in a place beyond; so every man must yield
the leasehold of his days. (Donoghue 2002, 65, lines 2583–2591)

The failing of his sword—that is to say his strength, his body—precipitates death, the ending of the hero's journey). The failing body is another kind of bodily instability with which the hero's journey is concerned, yet *because* it runs counter to the hero-paradigm, it is largely ignored when discussing the hero. The hero is (bodily) wholeness, and I contend, that it is in this insistence on bodily wholeness—an insistence that is so pervasive its implications are often

elided—that woman is excluded from being a hero. She is excluded because, as I have argued, she is body, instability, and change.

Woman is not the hero, and in so being, she is Other—no space is afforded to her, apart from in opposition to him. This is the requirement of that “conceptual centre” of binary oppositions (Hourihan 1997, 15). In order for the hero to be heroic, he must be superior. As Hourihan (1997) suggests,

Hero stories inscribe the male/female dualism, asserting the male as the norm, as what it means to be human, and defining the female as other—deviant, different, dangerous. The essence of the hero’s masculinity is his assertion of control over himself, his environment and his world. (68–69)

The way in which this assertion echoes the arguments, in terms of Western philosophy, of Grosz (1994) and Battersby (1998) is striking. Across these two discourses—that do, admittedly, suffer from a wealth of white, male perspectives—the Othering of woman is particularly similar. Here, she is “deviant, different, dangerous” and above she is both “*more* biological, *more* corporeal, and *more* natural” (Grosz 1994, 154, emphasis original) and trapped in a “flesh [that] is [...] monstrous—with a materiality which is more fully immanent” (Battersby 1998, 19). Within both, the body is key. The body is the source of, and reason for, her exclusion because, as Hourihan suggests, “the essence of the hero’s masculinity is his control,” and the body is the primary site of control; it is that which must be controlled first, before the land, monsters, or others can be tamed. For if the hero does not control his own body, how can he control anything else?

Yet, the body, particularly the female body, frequently refuses such control, and it is this body that refuses her a place within the hero story. Hourihan (1997) goes as far as arguing: “women are, essentially, not ‘characters’ at all but symbols of events in the hero’s psyche” (156). Woman exists only in relation to him: his bride, the mother of his children, the crone or goddess who aids him on his quest or the witch who hinders him, and through being placed in such roles, woman is contained. She becomes part of that which is controlled by the hero, and it is not just in mythic narratives that such containing occurs. For, the illusions of choice that appear to offer female

adolescents the chance to be subject and author of their own story are constituent to the positioning of woman as motif in myth, and it is a positioning that occurs because of a perceived instability of body that is, and has been historically, associated with woman.

In terms of more traditional hero studies, the dominance of the male hero is an issue that some feminist theorists seek to solve through a (re)turn to the goddess figure, as is arguably the issue at stake for in *The Feminist Companion to Mythology* (Larrington 1992). Here, the hero-paradigm, as I have argued it, is posited as not enough, so a turn to the goddess works to balance the pool of mythic figures. Yet, for all the good work it does—seeking to address issues of plurality and Eurocentricism, issues that arguably plague the male-dominated field of criticism—the turn to goddess articulates a disavowal of the male hero and his journey, a disavowal that frequents many feminist responses to myth. This disavowal most often comes in the form of a re-envisioning of the hero narrative, through, for example, myths of the goddess.

Critics also use goddess myths in order to conceive a new model of the hero, a task that Nadya Aisenberg (1994) takes up in *Ordinary Heroines: Transforming the Male Myth*. Beginning with the claim that a contemporary heroine is needed, Aisenberg envisions a heroine who is “deeply committed to a more humane society [...] forward-looking [...] a responsive leader [...] an ordinary woman endeavouring, nevertheless, to tackle extraordinary problems” (13). Yet, this call essentially inverts the thread of dominance running through the traditional pattern: replacing heroic conquering with humanity, the traditional striking out on his own with a responsiveness, and an ordinary woman who is not god-touched, as so many male heroes are. However empowering Aisenberg’s contemporary heroine might be, the pattern still remains subjected to the binary oppositions of the traditional hero story because it is the inversion of his story. The binary oppositions must be addressed, narratives—such as bodily instability, the inclusion of difference, touch, relation—must be offered as that which disrupts the binary through being in-between the binary pairs.

Given her concern with the hero story’s “conceptual centre” of “binary oppositions,” Hourihan (1997) also addresses this concern with reversal (15).

For her, such stories—and she gives, as examples, Babette Cole’s *Prince Cinders* (1987) and *Princess Smarty Pants* (1986), among others—merely recapitulate, through inversion, dominant norms. Hourihan suggests that these revisions often “ridicule [...] the gender stereotypes” that they seek to undermine (206), and in doing so, they fail. For example, Hourihan suggests that Cole’s stories “lampoon the stereotypes of large hairy masculinity and the swashbuckling hero who overcomes all difficulties” (205), and in so doing they remain tied to the very norms they seek to redress. Moreover, and of particular relevance to my concerns, Hourihan posits these revisions as “ultimately nihilistic for they offer no alternative, positive models of behavior for either males or females” (205). It is for this reason that I am interested in heroic bodies that change, break, bleed and are not always entirely human. For, these bodies not only engage binary oppositions by speaking from the spaces between oppositions, but they also offer alternative frameworks for, in Hourihan’s terms, “positive model[ing].”

In offering such bodies, mythopoeic YA fantasy deviates not only from traditional myth, as that literature depends upon the stability of the male hero’s form but also from Western philosophy. Through narratives of cross-dressing, Lunar “glamours,” menstruation, shape-shifting, and being cyborg, Pierce and Meyer’s texts produce the female body as a site of change. This not only affords a chance for the traditional hero to be looked at anew, but it also questions the representational economy dominating the West’s popular and media culture. In other words, through negotiations of pluralities, these mythopoeic YA fantasy texts open spaces in which female heroes break boundaries and blur borders, and in which they challenge the necessity of the male hero and all that he represents through a questioning of bodily stability. Moreover, it is a questioning that affects the insistence on appearance dominating the West, as that narrative is underscored by this mythic view. In many respects it returns to that “possibility” of fantasy that Pierce (1993, 50) offered, in that, I believe possibility is mythopoeic YA fantasy’s conceptual centre, not traditional myth’s binary oppositions. Rather than binary oppositions, this fantasy offers multiplicity, difference and instability, and, in so doing, it makes a space for sheroes who are not trapped in, or limited by, their bodies.

DISNEY'S CINDERELLA: A FEMININE IDENTITY

While Cinderella is for many little girls synonymous with the “Disney Princess,” there are countless versions—and revisions—of the Cinderella motif; the transformation (or makeover) from pauper to princess that is the heart of this story. However, this becoming-princess is also, quite simply, a narrative of growing up, and as such it offers a feminine identity. In the case of Disney’s Cinderella, it is an identity of “Princess,” a mass-market, consumer-orientated version of femininity that demurely plays along the edges of hyper-sexualisation. Thus, while Cinderella is not the first Disney princess (Snow White claimed that title in 1937), nor is she, at least in terms of merchandise sales, currently Disney’s favourite princess (Elsa, of *Frozen*, dethroned her in 2013, despite not, at least at the time of writing, being an official Princess), Cinderella is the *iconic* Disney princess—the Princess of Princesses, in many respects.⁵⁷ In popular and media culture, Cinderella, as a part of the Disney Princess franchise, is one of the first feminine identities that young girls are offered.

Yet, Disney’s Cinderella is underscored by the fairytale figure. Falling under the Aarne-Thompson tale type 510a,⁵⁸ “stories of persecuted heroines” (Ashliman 1998), Cinderella, as she is known in contemporary Western culture, is widely considered a favourite, and she also appears as Aschenputtel in Germany, Katie Woodencloak in Norway and, more often than not, simply as daughter or girl. There is something quite endearing, and enduring, in Cinderella’s rise from *those* ashes in order to marry *that* prince, and while she exists in countless versions, the two most well-known (in the West) are those of Charles Perrault and the Grimm brothers; yet, two more different stories are difficult to imagine. Perrault’s ([1697] 1966) ends with a moral, extolling girls to beauty within and without, and the Grimms’ ([1812] 1997) with the wicked step-sisters getting their eyes pecked out, “And thus, for their wickedness and falsehood, they were punished with blindness all their days” (128). However,

⁵⁷ To be an “official” Disney Princess is to have been inducted into the court.

⁵⁸ Unless specifically noted, Disney’s Cinderella—character or film—refers to the 1950s animated film. See, Geronimi (1950).

while the shape of their endings differ, there is a similar core message: the feminine identity rewarded within both versions is Cinderella's "beauty within and without," not the step-sister's "wickedness and falsehood"—these things bring "punishment."

This grounding in fairytale is important, for it is upon the fairytale that Walt Disney constructed his Cinderella. In fact, the film's opening credits claim that its Cinderella is "From the Original Classic by Charles Perrault." Crediting Perrault in this way not only establishes a direct lineage between the film and the fairy tale, but it also (re)establishes Perrault's story as a classic, perhaps aiming, even before it begins, to bestow the same "classic" status on this new incarnation. As Linda Parsons (2004) argues, it is also quite telling that the Disney film links itself to Perrault's version of the tale rather than the Grimms'. For Parsons, "the Grimm version is based on female empowerment enabling its reclamation by women, while the Perrault version embodies a patriarchal point of view" (143). While this makes the Perrault version unsuitable for the feminist revisions with which she is concerned, the connection illustrates precisely the kind of feminine identity offered by Disney's *Cinderella*. Thus, it is this positioning—emanating from a patriarchal point of view, or the "powdered sugar" nature of the heroine, as Erika Jarvis (2015) describes Disney's recent Cinderella (in Branagh 2015)—that describes the feminine identity available through Cinderella, extending to include Disney's 2015 Cinderella as well as to dominant narratives of Cinderella.

Furthermore, it is a link to fairy tale that the Disney film is overly determined to make: first, through that opening credit, and second, through the love story it enacts. This love story is the plot of fairy tales, as the Grand Duke suggests when he, at the ball (and more than halfway into the film, when viewers might have forgotten), re-establishes the connection to fairy tale by suggesting that the love story imagined by the king for his son is "a pretty plot for fairy tales." Little does the Grand Duke realise that Prince Charming and Cinderella are engaging in this "pretty plot" right before the king's, and the viewers', eyes. In this way, Disney's *Cinderella* self-consciously constructs itself as emulating Perrault's fairy tale, and it is this re-telling that has ramifications for the feminine identity the film offers through the figure of Cinderella: an

identity underscored by Cinderella's appearance, her work/duties, and a notion of dreaming (see, also, Lundberg 2013).

In terms of the character's appearance and general occupation, fairy tales in their traditional sense are not about innovation: Cinderella is not a cyborg (not conventionally, at least) (Meyer 2012), Rapunzel is not a computer hacker (Meyer 2014a), and Snow White is not disfigured (Meyer 2015c). It is a point Bruno Bettelheim (1976) makes—in his still influential, if not also passé, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*—when he suggests, “all [fairy tale] characters are typical rather than unique” (8). For Bettelheim this is largely the point of such tales. The characters are “typical” so that children, within his argument, may see themselves within the tale. In other words, the fairytale hails the child through the ordinary characters who may be like the child; this is why Cinderella must be pauper *before* she is princess, and it is why Disney's Cinderella is a thoroughly domestic creature.⁵⁹ As Naomi Wood (1996) argues, Cinderella is,

the ideal housewife: she's beautiful (in a softly curved, Miss America, girl-next-door kind of way [...]); innocently sexy (one of our first views of her is her rear end charmingly presented under the bedcovers); a loving caregiver (she tends animals in lieu of children). (35)

It is telling that the predominant aspects of Cinderella's “ideal” nature have to do with her appearance: “beautiful” and “innocently sexy.” Yes, she is an “ideal housewife,” but “ideal housewife” is modified by the appearance. Cinderella is an “ideal housewife” precisely *because* she is “beautiful,” “innocently sexy,” as well as a “loving caregiver.” The caregiving is important, but the appearance is more so. It is a particularly domestic, feminine-self-through-appearance that Cinderella embodies, and it is one that her animal friends, as foils for Cinderella, demonstrate throughout the film, particularly in terms of clothing.

⁵⁹ It is also in the names of the characters, as made evident by the two films: while Lady Tremaine, for example, is named in the 1950 animated film, where she runs less risk of becoming a “real” person, in the 2015 live-action remake, she is merely Stepmother, her function. Names, in fairy tales and live-action remakes, have a strong tendency to match a character's role or function—Prince Charming, Grand Duke, Coachman.

The mouse, Gus, for example, does not get a dress because he is a *he*—and “that does make a difference,” as Cinderella intones.⁶⁰ In this space, dresses contribute to one’s *feminine* identity, an identity that presupposes femaleness as Gus—because he is a boy mouse—cannot wear a dress, marking him as not female. At the other end of the spectrum, Cinderella’s ball gown marks her as appropriately feminine (and thus female), in that, not only is she female and thus able to wear dresses (a certain basic level of femaleness/femininity), but she is also able to wear ball gowns, a very specific kind of dress marking a very specific (heightened and ideal) femininity. In other words, dresses, as they are articulated within Disney’s *Cinderella* narrative, establish a hierarchical rendering of femininity: while most dresses (the one Gus cannot wear and the “rags” Cinderella wears for working) simply mark someone as female or *not*, Cinderella’s ball gown represents the epitome of femininity. The ball gown transforms her into an “eligible maiden,” yet underscoring this physical appearance is a narrative of feminine work (chores) that must also be accomplished before Cinderella may go to the ball.

This reading hinges on the purpose of the ball: “arranging the conditions” for a “boy to meet a girl,” conditions that imply a reading of class, in that, while as the daughter of a nobleman Cinderella is intrinsically an “eligible maiden,” her social positioning at the time of the ball makes her ineligible. In other words, while the king’s missive may insist that “every eligible maiden” attend, it takes Lady Tremaine to clarify the eligible: Cinderella’s chores must be completed (appropriate feminine work) and she (like all other girls) must find something “suitable” to wear (appropriate appearance). Placed into a position of inferiority, in terms of class, by Lady Tremaine, the hard work that Cinderella must do is how the pauper becomes princess. I believe this work also metaphorically relates to the beauty-work that women must undertake in order to appease the “beauty myth,” or standard of feminine appearance dominating their discursive situation (Woolf 1991, 6). In other words, the chores Cinderella

⁶⁰ Gus is also quite rotund; as such, he does not meet expectations of female (or feminine) appearance on two levels: he is male *and* he is overweight. Many thanks to Catherine Charlwood for reminding me of this second connection.

must complete metaphorically represent “beauty work,” plausible as part of Cinderella’s “work” is finding something “suitable” to wear.

In this sense, Disney’s *Cinderella* is a narrative that recapitulates the binary opposition between men and women residing at the heart of fairy tales, and in the case of *Cinderella* and Parson’s “romance ideology” (2005, 135), it is an opposition that sees woman as a Bride-to-Be-Had. She is, after all, the “maid predestined to be his bride,” according to the Grand Duke’s “pretty plot” that is, in fact, the plot of the film. In other words, *Cinderella* charts not just the successful transference of the girl from her parental home to that of her husband but also the successful transformation of child into woman.⁶¹ Cinderella’s narrative is the hegemonic hero story for females.

Significantly, the fairytale does this while having Cinderella—who in the animated Disney version is depicted as having strawberry blond hair, piercingly blue eyes, and a tiny waist—maintain an always beautiful appearance, even if it requires the assistance of animals and Fairy Godmother. However, this beauty, as a symbolic indicator of a girls’ worthiness (for marriage) is not limited to the Disney narrative. It also serves an important function within traditional European fairy tales, as Maria Tatar’s commentary for “Ashfeathers,” one of the recently-recovered tales collected by Franz Xaver Von Schönwerth (2015) and another version of the 510a story, suggests.⁶² Here, Tatar notes, “[Ashfeather’s suitor] does not seem to need her consent. He falls in love, woos her, and whisks her off to his castle, without a word from her. Consent is coded through the display of beauty she puts on in church [which, in this version, she attends instead of a ball]” (Schönwerth 2015, 222). In other words, Cinderella/Ashfeather’s beauty—coded through cleanliness and fine clothes (in contrast to her normally ash/cinder-covered appearance and rags)—supersedes the necessity of words. In this way, beauty clearly speaks across “Cinderella” narratives, tales included within the Aarne-Thompson 510a classification.

⁶¹ This is the charter function—that is, the establishing of a pattern of behaviour—of myth. See, for example, Malinowski (1926).

⁶² Many thanks to Dr Amy Davis for suggesting this link.

Wood (1996) further argues that *Cinderella*, perhaps more than any other Disney film, is bound up in Walt Disney's creating of the American fairy tale—a particular version of the American dream, and, I believe, of Western femininity. Moreover, it is a dream underscored by hard-work and heteronormative values (admittedly not without complications and tensions, as is the case with fairy tales in general). In the case of *Cinderella*, she, despite the difficulties of her situation, maintains not only a positive attitude but also one dependent on the belief that, as the song suggests, “No matter how your heart is grieving/ If you keep on believing/ The dream that you wish will come true.” It is this dreaming that plays not only an integral role in how *Cinderella* constructs a particular version of femininity, but it also speaks to how the dream of marriage also contributes to successful femininity. While *Cinderella*'s dream is not explicitly shared (doing so, as she tells the mice, would make it not come true), the dream—to find true love through a traditional, heteronormative marriage, and to escape her present situation—is very much implied by the way she gazes at the castle in the distance. Through marriage, the prince—the hero—will save her.

Cinderella's dream as “appropriately” feminine, according to traditional ideas/ideals of femininity, is a reading demonstrable on, at least, two levels. First, as Wood (1996) suggests, it is a dream “shaped by the values of self-control and devotion to duty, as defined by a patriarchal order” (26). *Cinderella*'s dreaming is both contrasted with, and underscored by, the household jobs she dutifully completes: the work is for the present, the dreams for the future. Furthermore, and as the happily-ever-after ending indicates, her dream is allowed because it is the dream of patriarchy: the dream of heterosexual coupling that produces—within the sanctity of marriage—children, for the sake of perpetuating patriarchy (the king's constant desire for grandchildren makes this explicit). Thus, through the medium of fairy tale, Disney's *Cinderella* is about a certain kind of cultural work, and in so being, it offers, as Wood (1996) argues, “a normative standard of American-style” or values, values that are embodied by *Cinderella* (as well as the wider Princess community) (25). In short, *Cinderella*'s dream is the dream of all women, or so it should be.

Disney's 1950 animated feature offers a self-conscious relationship with fairy tale, as well as with the binary, patriarchal interactions between men and women embedded within those narratives. This relationship—not only to fairy tale but also to a particular version, Charles Perrault's, of the Cinderella tale—contrives a narrow feminine identity, a hyper-femininity that is only available on the body. The question is: Are there alternatives? Yes, the "sheroes" of mythopoeic YA fantasy model ways of being female that not only counter superficial femininity but that do so through bodies that are disguised, different, multiple, injured and not entirely human. Pierce's Alanna of Trebond and Olau (Alanna/Alan), Veralidaine Sarra'sri (Daine), Keladry of Mindelan (Kel) and Alianne of Pirate's Swoop (Aly) are such female heroes, as is Meyer's Linh Cinder (Cinder).

FROM HEROES TO SHEROES

Much of today's fantasy and not just that for young adults owes a great debt to J.R.R Tolkien though not as much to C.S. Lewis, despite Lewis's indelible mark on children's literature and Tolkien and Lewis's mutual influence on the Oxford English curriculum, a topic that Cecire (2011 and 2013) discusses at length. In terms of world-building—a cornerstone of the mythopoeic mind-set—Tolkien's Middle Earth is unparalleled,⁶³ and it has become the standard by which fantasy authors measure their work (Haber 2011), and by which their work is measured—whether in contention, as is the *His Dark Materials* trilogy (Pullman 1995–2000), or in some kind of accord, as is the *Inheritance Cycle* (Paolini 2002–2011). Thus, this section demonstrates why Tolkien plays a more integral role to this genre than does Lewis, while also tracing a narrative arch from Tolkien and Lewis's heroes and women to Pierce and Meyer's sheroes—heroes who are women.

This section also begins mapping mythopoeic YA fantasy, a term I draw from Tolkien's use of the notion in his poem "Mythopoeia" (1988). Addressing the act of myth-making, this poem suggests that through art man takes on the role of "Sub-creator" (98), particularly in the constructing of a Secondary

⁶³ See: *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955).

World (see, also, Tolkien [1947] 1997). Dedicating the poem “*To one [C.S. Lewis] who said that myths were lies and therefore worthless, even though ‘breathed through silver’*” (97, emphasis original), Tolkien offers a crucial first illustration as to why Lewis’s fantasy is not of concern to this thesis: myths—and by extension a mythopoeic mind-set—are “lies” and “worthless” to Lewis. Entrenched within the structure of binary oppositions, here, manifest as “boys are better than girls; light-coloured people are better than dark-coloured people” (Pullman 1998) and, crucially, allegory (truth) is better than myth (lies), Lewis’s fantasy—specifically *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950–1956), Lewis’s most renown contribution to children’s literature and to fantasy—lacks the creationary impetus that is the predominant characteristic of mythopoeic YA fantasy, relying instead on allegory, a mode of writing Lewis believed particularly pertinent to writing for children. In an essay on the topic, he states

a fairy tale addressed to children, was exactly what I must write—or burst. Partly, I think, that this form permits, or compels you to leave out things I wanted to leave out. (1982, 65)

While I am not overly concerned with authorial intention, this statement of motivation is insightful, especially in how it links children’s literature and fairy tale as forms that allow Lewis to “leave out things.” Essentially, the two forms unite as the perfect vehicle for Lewis’s allegory, namely that women, and girls-becoming-women, are representative of sin and threats to his idyllic England.

Illustratively, the series’ primary antagonist is “one of the Jinn” and a descendant of Lilith (1950, 81), and the White Witch’s magical powers—the ability to turn beings into stone and to cast an endless winter, with no Christmas—condemn her still. As Cecire (2011) suggests, the White Witch “*is sin, evil and otherness personified*” (101, emphasis original)—because she is a woman. However, it is not just the female villain who suffers within *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the sisters—Susan and Lucy—fare little better, despite their status as protagonists. As a little girl, Lucy just about manages within Lewis’s allegory, but Susan, as she transforms into a young woman—and as her sexuality can no longer be avoided—is damned more perniciously than the White Witch. Interested in “nothing nowadays except nylons and lipstick and

invitations,” Susan is “no longer a friend of Narnia” by the series’ final instalment, because she was “always a jolly sight too keen on being grown-up” (1956, 161). The “lipstick,” “nylons,” “invitations,” and “being grown-up” are about becoming-woman and sexual, and for her interest in these things, Susan is banned from Narnia, from Lewis’s figuring of Heaven.

Admittedly, Tolkien’s fantasy does not escape this difficulty with women, though his portrayal of female characters speaks to a more generalised dissatisfaction with the hero story. A result of the disillusionment felt after World War II, Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* suggests there are no more “great deeds” to be performed by “great men.” Man was no longer able to meet the standards of the traditional, often god-touched, hero, so Tolkien inverted the figure, turning to the hobbits, or “half-ings,” to populate his hero’s journey. Literally half a man, Tolkien’s hobbits appear the most un-heroic, yet they perform the most heroic deeds within the tale, and it is within this frame that Tolkien’s women sit: simultaneously granted power—because they are not men—they are also divested of it, because they are not heroes in the traditional sense. It is, for example, precisely because Eowyn is not a man that *she* could kill Anagmar. As Neville (2005) suggests,

[Eowyn’s] marginal position is essential—and not simply because of the demands of the prophecy within the plot of the text. If she were not marginalised and assumed to be powerless, her action would not resonate with the central story of Frodo and Sam. (109)

Tolkien’s women are powerless—with a purpose, for in being powerless (or assumed as such), they too commit great deeds. However, trapped within the theme of the unlikely hero, Eowyn’s great deed does not equal her to the male hero. She must remain marginal—or the plot falls to pieces.

Thus while both Tolkien and Lewis’s portrayal of women is lacking, Tolkien’s fantasy—because of its mythopoeic nature—stands as the cornerstone of the vein of fantasy literature with which I am concerned. The importance of Tolkien, despite the problems of even his fantasy, cannot be overstated. *Meditations on Middle-Earth: New Writings on the Worlds of J.R.R. Tolkien* (Haber 2001) sees some of fantasy’s biggest names—Terry Pratchett, Diane Duane, Robin Hobb, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Orson Scott Card—musing,

sycophantically at times, on the “Tolkien effect,” children’s and YA fantasy author Esther Friesner even refers to Tolkien as a “gateway drug” (2001, 56). During a 2011 ComicCon panel,⁶⁴ Pierce, along with Friesner, *Sphinx’s Queen* (2010), and Caitlin Kittredge, *The Iron Throne* (2011), discussed the role of women within young adult fantasy, as well as her impetus for writing strong female characters. Stating, she spent a lot of time “grubbing” for female heroes when she was young and that Tolkien’s Eowyn was the first she found within fantasy (Buzz 2011), a comment that resounds with the theme of a 2006 phone interview between Phillip Pullman (*His Dark Materials*), Tamora Pierce, and Christopher Paolini (*Inheritance Cycle*). Hosted by Powell’s Books in conjunction with the Random House group, this interview saw all three authors situate themselves as working within a Tolkienian inspired tradition. Pierce even states, “from the very beginning [...] I bowed to Tolkien; he was the master. He’s where I started with fantasy” (Powell’s Books).

Tolkien may have been where Pierce “started with fantasy,” but he is not where she remained. Thus, while the exclusionary conceptual centre of the hero’s journey and Tolkien’s fantasy—as the direct forefather of this genre—are controversial foundations, they do provide many positive features. In fact, the notion of journeying is, itself, advantageous. For, it is through the journeys undertaken by Pierce and Meyer’s sheroes (female heroes) that these texts write themselves into mythic narratives. Mythopoeic YA fantasy is the stories of heroes: “an idea made her [Daine’s] jaw drop: if *she’s* [Alanna] a legend, and a hero, then *anyone* could be a hero” (Pierce [1994] 1999, 61); even when those heroes turn up in the most unlikely of places: “Oh, wonderful. You’re [Kel] on a hero’s quest to get rid of bullies” ([1999] 2004, 149), or, in Meyer’s world, as a revolutionary.

‘The people of Luna don’t need a princess. They need a revolutionary.’

[...]

⁶⁴ Briefly, ComicCon is the now massive conference/festival covering all things science fiction, fantasy and otherwise “geeky.”

Cinder furrowed her brow. ‘A revolutionary,’ she repeated. She liked that a lot better than *princess*. (2014a, 549, emphasis original)

Thus, while the hero—or “shero”—may take a different shape or earn their title fighting “bullies,” he or she is still a “hero” as long as actions merit the title: “She’s [Alanna] a hero. She’s proved it over and over” (Pierce [1999] 2004, 165). All one has to do, as *Throne* suggests to Cress (Rapunzel), is “be heroic” (Meyer 2015c, 606).

Yet, heroes to sheroes is not an easy transition to make, and even Pierce’s work, for all that it does for expanding the notion of the hero, is not without flaw. For example, the *Song of the Lioness* quartet (1983–1988) evokes a superficial conversation with myth: Alanna is simply shoved into the role of a male/masculine hero (Flanagan 2008), and this quartet essentially replicates Campbell’s hero’s journey. Alanna “ventures forth” in order to become a knight, disguising herself as a boy ([1949] 1973, 35). She encounters many “fabulous forces” (35), including malevolent spirits in the “Ysandir” (1984, 40), a human villain in Roger, and a mythical foe in the “God of the Roof” (1988, 175). With each, she is victorious, and for so being, she is blessed and granted a boon by the Goddess, “‘wear my token, and be brave’ (1984, 18).”⁶⁵ Alanna’s final victory, within the separation-initiation-return framework, occurs with Chitral (the “God of the Roof” (175)) with whom she battles to win his Dominion Jewel. When in the hands of natural leader, this Jewel grants fabulous power, for good or evil. Upon returning home to Tortall, Alanna gifts the Dominion Jewel to King Jonathan of Conté (her former fellow page, knight master, and lover). At a time of great peril, Jon uses it to save the kingdom, while Alanna is busy battling Roger who, in turn, is attempting regicide. On the surface, Alanna’s narrative is a straightforward replication of the monomyth, particularly, in that she cross-dresses in order to participate in the male world of knighthood. While Alanna’s femaleness does assert itself through a changing body and menarche and she is narrated as eventually coming to terms with being female, this quartet is superficially more about replication than are Pierce’s subsequent offerings.

⁶⁵ The Goddess is alternatively known as “the Great Mother” within this mythology. See, Pierce (1984, 18).

However, it is unsurprising that Pierce's first quartet—with the four texts published in 1983, 1984, 1986, and 1988—engaged with the hero's journey and thus mythopoeic fantasy in such an apparently superficial way. It is an issue that *The Blue Sword* also shares (McKinley 1982). In that, while Angharad Crew—the shero of this text—may not cross-dress to the same extent as Alanna does, she does insist on being called Harry, implying a masculine persona. It is a “problem” that has to do with both the tradition of myth and the Tolkienian inspired fantasy within which these texts are working as well as the discursive space—the cultural situation prior to “girl power”—within which they were produced. The transition to Sheroes takes time, as Alanna tells her daughter (Aly) in *Trickster's Choice*, “the whole point to doing as I did [becoming a knight] was so you could do something else, if you wanted to” ([2003] 2005, 18). In this moment, this later text by Pierce not only demonstrates a more complex engagement with myth, by expanding the role of the hero (“you could do something else”), but it also comments on its own world building, explaining the kinds of changes seen across Pierce's corpus: Alanna cross-dressed (replicating the male hero journey) so that Aly (and Pierce's subsequent female heroes) did not have to.

Beginning publication in 2012, Meyer's texts also benefit from the various avenues opened by Pierce's fantasy (as well as other earlier mythopoeic YA fantasy), and they take full advantage: Cinder(ella) is a cyborg; Scarlet (Little Red Riding Hood) must rescue her missing grandmother, with the help of the wolf; Cress (Rapunzel) has been trapped on a satellite for most of her life, rather aggrandising a certain tower; Winter (Snow White) is a disfigured citizen of the moon, with magical powers that she refuses to use—a refusal that is driving her insane. The *Chronicles* interweave these four (fairytale) sheroes into one narrative arc: starting with Cinder, the subsequent texts introduce, respectively, Scarlet, Cress and Winter. Thus, it is ultimately Cinder's story—most obviously because her text comes first, but also because she undertakes the most developed “hero journey.” She is also Cinder(ella) and Cinderella is, as I discussed, a particularly important female figure within the West.

Moreover, as a cyborgian female hero, Cinder's visually fragmented body is specifically about the issues of bodily instability and disability lacking in the

hero story—as it was injury that caused her to become cyborg. Cross-dressing presents the visually obscured body, while the Lunar glamour manipulates the body’s “real” appearance. Menstruation, and the pregnancy that it makes possible, offers another kind of bodily instability—a bleeding body and a body as possibly more than one. Shape-shifting offers an ambiguous body, while also questioning the division between humans and animals, and the cybernetic body offers the multiple body whilst also blurring the opposition between humans and machines. Through their heightened embodiedness, these bodies demonstrate, the self in relation to not only other humans but also to animals and technology. This interdependency is critical, as it contests the individuality that is the goal of the hegemonic developmental models of adolescence, maps of adolescence that exclude the adolescent girl. Moreover, these sheroic bodies do so while also demonstrating that a unique and individual self remains within—and because of—unity. They demonstrate how a self might be “scored by relationality into uniqueness” (Battersby 1998, 7), a process that also applies to the defining of YAL.

SECONDARY WORLDS: OR, A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Not only do the complex layers of history
embedded (as it were) in the landscape enrich
the texture of the stories, but the meanings of
the landscapes themselves provide a subtext
for the journeys:
places mean.
(Hunt 1987, 11)

From the most (seemingly) basic fairytale to the most complex Secondary World, the setting—the landscape, its rules and structures—is imperative to successful fantasy (see, also, Sullivan 1992), and it is through the fully-formed, logically created Secondary World that the possibilities of fantasy are fully realised. In this vein, the *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* suggests:

A Secondary World can be defined as an autonomous world or venue which is not bound to mundane reality, which is impossible according to common sense and which is self-coherent as a venue for story. (Clute and Grant 1997, n.p.).

The key points are: the departure from “mundane reality,” what I refer to as consensus reality and internally “self-coherent,” for these are what makes the world different and yet plausible, within its own terms.

Tolkien ([1947] 1997) expands on both these notions in his description of the Secondary World.

He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is ‘true’: it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed. You are then out in the Primary World again, looking at the little abortive Secondary World from outside. (132)

While the implicit argument—that the fantasy author, this creator (he who makes), is male—is questionable, the definition offers a few salient points: the world created by a fantasy text does not physically exist; it is one “your mind can enter.” This has particular bearing on how the world is constructed and on what devices are used in that construction; as I discuss below, maps and narratives comprising multiple volumes are quite useful. It also suggests a notion of immersion, you “believe it, while [...] *inside*.” There is a sense of separation and of leaving what Tolkien terms the Primary World (consensus reality) in order to experience, through the mind, this Secondary World. There is also the potential for failure, which suggests that there are certain expectations—disbelief must not arise, for one—regarding the construction of such a world (see, also, Lo 2012).

Thus, for Tolkien, the setting of a story is not secondary (see, also, Butler 2013). “Places mean,” as this section’s epigraph suggests (Hunt 1987, 11). Places are of vital importance because it is within a place that fantasy may occur, and Tolkien is not the only one who shares this belief. Sullivan (1992) notes “the logically-created Secondary World” ensures the success of what he terms high fantasy (98). Fantastical objects, creatures, or the impossible cannot merely be thrown in at random each must be grounded within the rules of a given world. As Sullivan (1992) further argues, “you must create a space in which the impossible can exist” (98). Thus, while contentious—M. John

Harrison (2007) depicts world building as “the great clomping foot of nerdism,” for example (para. 3)—Secondary Worlds are integral to the mythopoeic YA fantasy with which I am concerned, if for no other reason than because they create spaces in which shape-shifting, Lunar “glamours,” and being cyborg—alternative images of living and being an adolescent female body that are, as yet, impossible within Western consensus reality—logically occur.

Yet, the worlds Pierce and Meyer create are markedly different; Pierce’s Tortall is a feudal society set in a pseudo-medieval world very much resembling Europe. There is a highly developed polytheistic religious system and some individuals are Gifted, possessing magical abilities. Spanning the last 30 years and consisting of 17 novels,⁶⁶ Pierce’s Tortall is not only particularly well developed (if only through sheer longevity), but it also reflects the complex web of changing cultural concerns, expectations, and norms covering the period since its initial publication. This accounts for the transition seen across the corpus. As such, it is also rather fitting that Meyer’s Earthen Union—the world created in her Lunar Chronicles while also serving as its setting—takes place in the third era, a post WWIV reimagining of the world with Lunars (citizens of the moon) as hostile next-door-neighbours.

While still engaging a mythopoeic mind-set, this world does so by playing at the edges of science fiction. Admittedly, my inclusion of Meyer’s texts within this mythopoeic fantasy genre appears dubious, given the conceptual differences between science fiction and fantasy; however, it is not impossible. Laurence Yep (1978) argues that the shift from fantasy to science fiction merely requires “a series of transformations: the magical steed into a rocket ship, the knight’s armor into a white lab coat, the enchanted sword into a slide rule” (para. 10). I suggest, therefore, that the science fiction elements of Meyer’s world—hovercrafts and spaceships, cyborgs and androids, as well as futuristic medical technology—are differences of degree not of kind, a point that Campbell (1991) also makes of *Star Wars* (Lucas 1977). For Campbell, *Star Wars* is myth(ic) because it employs a mythic mind-set; it is concerned with

⁶⁶ Three new Tortall novels, following the early life of Numair, Daine’s mentor and lover, are set for release beginning in 2017.

world building, with life and death. Through the creation of new worlds, the mythopoeic speaks to what it means to be a self existing within this world while simultaneously offering new ways of being. Thus, texts like *Star Wars*—and Meyer’s *Lunar Chronicles*—are merely mythic forms in modern shapes.

This notion is imperative. A mythopoeic mind-set is not limited to the pseudo-medieval, though this setting is the prominent. Dharmadhikari (2009) suggests,

When I was around thirteen years old, I tried to write a fantasy novel. It was going to be an epic adventure with a cross-dressing princess on the run, a snarky hero, and dragons. I got stuck when I had to figure out what they would do after they left the city. Logically, there would be a tavern.

There were no taverns in India. (15)

While Dharmadhikari is reacting to the overwhelming white, male, European nature of fantasy (à la Tolkien and Lewis), he also misses the wider point of this fantasy. Snarky heroes who battle dragons and frequent taverns are commonplace in mythopoeic YA fantasy set in pseudo-medieval worlds. However, the pseudo-medieval is, despite its predominance, only one metaphorical rendering of a mind-set that runs much deeper. Yes, “places mean” because they shape the story—they shape the metaphorical aspects of character and of journey—but the place does not have to be pseudo-medieval, as Meyer’s text demonstrates, and the magic does not have to be wizards wielding spells, as Pierce’s wild magic and Meyer’s magical technology demonstrate.

However, Dharmadhikari does raise a valid issue: books set in non-Western worlds are necessary and needed—just as books offering alternative images of being an adolescent female body are needed. So, while the metaphor of dragons and the imagery of a tavern did not work for Dharmadhikari, he might have dreamt of an on the run gun-slinging desert girl determined to save herself, a still “snarky” (co)hero and djinns and ghouls—the metaphors employed in *Rebel of the Sands* owing to its pseudo-Arabian, with an undertone of the Wild West, rendering of the mythopoeic (Hamilton 2015). While the pseudo-medieval is prominent, it is not the only landscape a mythopoeic mind-

set might occupy, as the questions of being, life and death supersede this one specific landscape. An interesting avenue of further study would be to explore this mythopoeic mind-set in non-Western worlds as well as works written by non-Western authors.

MAGIC: THE GREAT EQUALISER

The logical occurrence of magic within a particular Secondary World is one of mythopoeic YA fantasy's most obvious divergences from the consensus reality of contemporary Western culture. In fact, the Secondary World itself depends on a certain kind of magic as Tolkien ([1947] 1997) suggests, the moment "the magic, or rather art, has failed. You are then out in the Primary World again" (132). Art is a kind of magic, one bound up in craft and in creation. However, in order for *this* magic (art) to succeed, the magic (fantastical occurrences) within the world has to maintain a logical consistency. Cathi Dunn MacRae (1998) even argues, in *Young Adult Fantasy Fiction*, that, "in a logical otherworld [a Secondary World], magic works as meticulously as science" (33), a useful pairing as the "magic" that occurs within Meyer's Lunar Chronicles is often more scientific than conventionally magical.

Thus, this section is concerned with establishing a framework of the magic that occurs within Pierce's Tortall Universe and Meyer's Lunar Chronicles because magic not only contributes to the success (or not) of the Secondary World, but it also underscores my readings in the following chapters, especially as Pierce often refers, in interviews, to magic as the "great equaliser" (Pierce 1993, 51 and Lo 2009b, n.p.). In this vein, magic quite literally makes that which is impossible (within Western consensus reality) possible, and this "making possible" aspect of world building is imperative to exploring how cross-dressing, glamouring, menstruating, shape-shifting and being cyborg offer alternative frameworks for living and being an adolescent female body. Finally, it is outside the scope of this section to explore all the complexities of magic within these texts. Rather, this section is concerned with establishing a framework of magic in order to support the readings of magic throughout.

In Pierce's Tortall, magic has two primary forms: "the gift" (1983, 49),⁶⁷ which is the sanctioned magic, the one taught in schools, and the magical ability most often possessed and "wild magic" (1992, 115), a magical ability that connects an individual to the world around them—animals, most frequently. The Gift, the all-purpose magic within this world, is magic in its most conventional sense. Gifted individuals can start fires, move objects telepathically and—once trained—anything else the wielder sets her (or his) mind to: in *Wolf Speaker* (1994), the Great Mage Numair Salmalín (and Daine's teacher) uses "a word of power" to turn an enemy mage into an apple tree (298).⁶⁸ While anything is theoretically possible, there are basic aspects of the Gift, aspects that everyone Gifted possesses—Daine suggests she is *not* Gifted because she cannot magically "start a fire, and Gifted *babies* manage that" (emphasis original, 1992, 15). It is in this traditional sense of Gifted that Alanna demonstrates ability, and she has a particular proclivity for "heal[ing], and [...] conjure[ing]," and her "brother's the same, only he can see people's minds and sometimes the future" too (1983, 96). The strength of one's ability and its particular focus varies between individuals.

The other (and Othered) magic in Pierce's Tortall universe is wild magic. Less schooled and more a "sympathetic" magic than the Gift; this magic sees a wielder as bonded, often, to a specific animal group.

'I am Tano, the cat-man. The cats come to me, also to my wife. We have cat-children.' [...] 'Cholombi is dog-man.' [...] 'Twins are monkey-girls.' [...] 'See? We all one-kind beast.' (1995, 95)

This is how wild magic typically functions within Pierce's Tortall. Yet, Daine possesses wild magic to such an extent that she earns the name "Daine, the

⁶⁷ While the Gift is not quite inconsistently capitalised within Pierce's Tortall universe, there does seem to have been a shift towards capitalisation in more recent texts. I adopt the capitalised version, for clarity.

⁶⁸ I refer to those Gifted (in the all-purpose sense) within Pierce's Tortall universe as mage. It is one of the titles used within the texts (see, especially, 1995), though "witch" (13), "sorcerer" (13) and the distinction Gifted/UnGifted are also employed.

Wildmage" (2000, 17),⁶⁹ because she is bonded to all the "beasts." While I explore this wild magic through readings of Daine's shape-shifting throughout (her shape-shifting depends on the wild magic), it is here sufficient to say that this is the unofficial, and often ignored, magic within Tortall. There is, in other words, a binary distinction between the Gift (sanctioned and of discourse) and wild magic (unsanctioned and of the body). Raka magic, another othered magic within the Tortall universe serves as an excellent example, especially, as raka magic offers an illustration of magic that is not just othered but that—in that othering—becomes a magic between the poles of opposition (Gifted/wild magic), while also continuing to develop the wider Tortall universe, the Secondary World.⁷⁰

Once the Kyprish Isles and held by native, brown-skinned raka queens, the Copper Isles were conquered in the years between 174 H.E. and 181 H.E.,⁷¹ when "the first Rittevon king was crowned as ruler of the newly renamed Copper Isles" ([2003] 2005, 3). From that time until, when, "in the winter of 462-463 H.E., the brown-skinned raka people and their many allies, part-bloods and white-skinned luarin, prepared for revolution against the luarin ruling house, the Rittevons" ([2004] 2005, 1). While the deeply complex issues of race are outside of the scope of this thesis, race—in that the "hero is white," as Hourihan (1997, 58) suggests—is present here in the difference between the ruling Rittevons (white-skinned, luarin) and the conquered raka queens (brown-skinned). Incidentally, the terms "luarin" and "raka" are not capitalised because they denote a person's race (white and "brown-skinned," respectively) not a nationality. This situating is necessary because it explains how, in the

⁶⁹ Epithets, like Daine's, are characteristic of classic and mythic narratives. In this use of the epithet, it succinctly describes a key aspect of the person. See, for example, Ong (1982).

⁷⁰ Part of the work undertaken by Pierce's quartet is the normalising of this 'othered' magic, speaking to the normalising of the fleshiness of the female body that is my specific concern. In other words, these texts—Meyer's too—are not only concerned with demonstrating alternative bodies, they are—owing to their speculative nature—inherently about alternatives of all kinds.

⁷¹ H.E. designates the Human Era within this world (see, also, Pierce [2003] 2005, 1).

Copper Isles, the Gift and raka magic—despite raka magic being a figuration of the Gift—are different, a notion a description of raka magic makes explicit:

Raka magic was shaped by subtlety, crafted by mages who spent their lives hiding things from other mages. To those who wielded their Gift as the mages of the Eastern and Southern Lands had been taught, raka magic seemed weak, good for only simple tasks. Its symbols were different, its spells far quieter, shaped for that effect over three hundred years of practice and development, with death for the raka mage who drew a luarin mage's attention. ([2004] 2005, 74)

The Gift and raka magic (an aspect of the Gift) both involve “spells” and “symbols;” they both involve language. Yet they are not the same: “raka magic seemed weak;” presumably, luarin magic does not. Crucially, however, this is from the perspective of “mages of the Eastern and Southern lands,” mages who wield their magic in the manner of the dominant. In this way, the differentiating of the (luarin) Gift from the “lesser” raka magic is about discourse and the power of discourse to linguistically (spells and symbols) establish superiority and truth. “Crown magic,” that is, “luarin magic” ([2004] 2005, 327), the Gift, these are all various names of the legitimate magic within this world. Crucially, this passage also establishes superiority along the lines of race: crown magic is white magic and this crown magic is a discourse of (literal) power within this world. Crown magic is the magic a (white) hero would wield.

However, raka magic does not constitute a straightforward opposition to the Gift, rather, it sits between the poles of a larger binary opposition between the Gift and wild magic. Raka magic disrupts the binary pair, making it a “third” (Garber 1992, 11) or an inter-dict (Irigaray [1974] 1985, 22). Thus, raka magic operates in the blank space between binary oppositions, and as is the case with all limen, it displays facets of both oppositional sides: raka magic uses “spells” and “symbols” just as the Gift does (Pierce [2004] 2005, 74) but its results are designed to be “carefully hidden under other spells [so] that Crown mages might not detect them” (ibid.). In this way, raka magic is also like wild magic, a magic that is typically ignored by because of its perceived simplicity—Carthakis (another nationality within this world) “think it’s old wives’ tales” (1992, 272).

In Meyer’s *Lunar Chronicles*, magic takes an altogether different shape, given the futuristic nature of the fantasy. Lunars, citizens of the moon (Luna),

have the ability to manipulate “bioelectricity” causing others to “see what the Lunar wishes them to see, and even feel what the Lunar wishes them to feel” (2012, 172), and, as “bioelectricity” suggests, this ability is a blurring of the distinction between “science” and “magic,” one the text continually navigates. Here, narration makes specific the scientific nature of the “lunar gift” to Cinder (and thus readers):

‘Well [...] the Lunar gift is nothing more than the ability to manipulate bioelectric energy—the energy that is naturally created by all living things. For example, it is the same energy that sharks use to detect their prey.’ (2012, 176)

The text posits this “gift” as both “natural,” in that it is “created by all living things” and also a “gift,” an out of the ordinary ability. In other words, this fantasy text takes something scientific—some research suggests that animals both produce bioelectricity and use it to communicate (see, also, Quantumbiologist 2010)—and makes it magical.

With this gift, Lunars are able to construct a “glamour [...] what they call the illusion of themselves that they project into the minds of others” (172), a topic under consideration in Chapter Three. Here, not only is the Lunar ability different from the Gift of Pierce’s Tortall universe, in that, it speaks to a kind of scientific ability, but it also does not require the working of spells in order to function: “although it still seemed like magic to her [Cinder], it was really a genetic trait Lunars were born with” (2013, 52). In this way, it is more akin to Daine’s wild magic, especially as the strengthening of the ability occurs through the strengthening of one’s mind, as is also the case for Daine.⁷²

Thus, while all Lunars possess this ability—unless they are born a “shell,” meaning “bioelectrically challenged” (2012, 176) or without “the gift” (176)—those most strongly gifted are made thaumaturges, or commanders in Queen Levana’s army, and here this “magical” ability is all about power.

⁷² Early on, Daine learns to meditate as a part of her magical training. Numair also teaches her mammalian anatomy. Both of these activities are to teach her control over her mind and body, and thus her power. Moreover, while her magic is unpredictable, the strength and organisation of her mind give her control over her magic. See, Pierce (1992).

It was believed that their queen ruled through mind control and that her thaumaturges were almost as strong as she was. That they could manipulate people's thoughts and emotions. That they could even control people's bodies if they chose, like puppets on strings. (2013, 301)

The Lunar ability to manipulate bioelectricity is about control; here, in the guise of law enforcement but also in terms of the glamour, as constructing a glamour—most often rendered as a more beautiful appearance—is how a Lunar controls how she (or he) is seen. In this way, the Lunar ability directly engages the ideals of popular and media culture while also offering the potentiality of their undoing, when illustrating the disconnect between the glamourised appearance and the physical, material body.

Briefly, there is also a second “magic” within Meyer’s Lunar Chronicles, the magic of futuristic technology. To those of a perspective aligned with contemporary Western consensus reality, androids, cyborgs, and hovercrafts do not *yet* exist, or do not yet exist to extent they do in Meyer’s futuristic rendering of the world.⁷³ Thus, this technology functions like magic, a claim supported by my above reading of Yep’s (1978) “series of transformations” (para.10). Moreover, in their execution, magic and science are not so far removed, as MacRae (1998) suggests with her notion that “magic works as meticulously as science” (33). I suggest the inverse is also true; in a (futuristic) Secondary World, science works as wondrously as magic.

Finally, the form of magic occurring in a Secondary World also speaks to the shape of that world. The Lunar ability, depicted as scientific and genetic, could not logically occur in Pierce’s pseudo-medieval universe, just as spells, sorcery, and wild magic (that is specifically linked to nature) could not logically occur in Meyer’s futuristic re-envisioning of the world. Yet, these specific magics do logically occur within their respective worlds, setting the tone of the fantastic bodies and selves available within that space as well as contributing to

⁷³ I use “same extent” because much of the technology in Meyer’s world is inspired by technology that does exist in contemporary culture. On her website, Meyer gives a thorough reading of the “Real-World Technology” that she suggests influenced her construction of the futuristic world in which *The Lunar Chronicles* is set. See, Meyer (2013a).

the space itself. Daine is a shapeshifter because of her wild magic just as Cinder is a cyborg because of the technological magic of her world.

MAPS

Within mythopoeic YA fantasy, there is no crossing of a threshold—no rabbit hole, wardrobe, rainbow, platform 9 ¾, or magical flight towards the second star on the right. The “reality” of mythopoeic YA fantasy is the reality created within, and by, the Secondary World. For this reason, maps often serve as both introduction to, and grounding within, the world of the story. They appeal to, while simultaneously creating, a sense of reality, a sense that this place is—or could be—“real” (see, also, Muehrcke and Muehrcke 1974). For Pierce’s *Song of the Lioness* quartet, this is an apparently straightforward portrayal of Tortall; including: Tortall’s mountains, hills, roads, cities, and fives, the seas and oceans surrounding the land as well as the boundaries between Tortall, and its neighbouring countries: Scanra to the north, Galla, Tusaine, Maren and Tyra eastwards and Carthak to the south, as figure 2.1 shows.

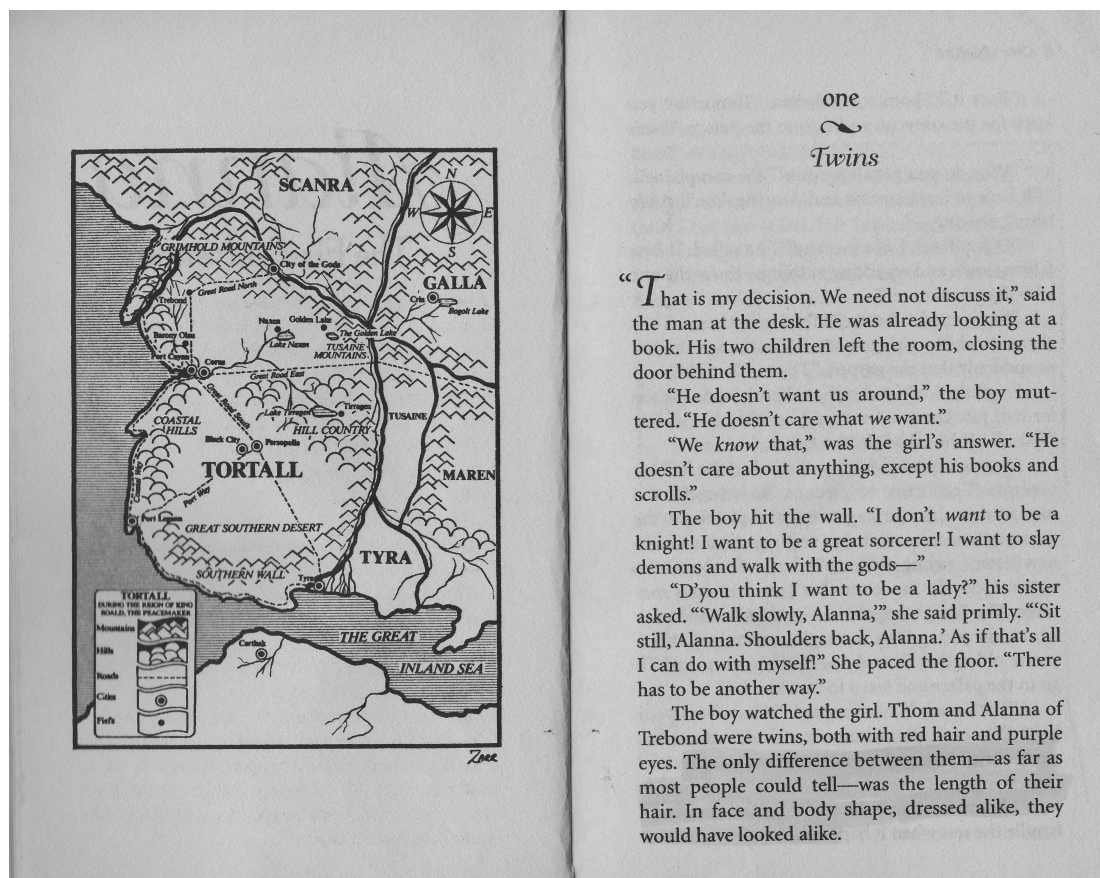


Figure 2.1 Pretextual Map of Tortall (Pierce 1983)

However, these mapped spaces correspond to no physical, geographical place. There is no mimetic representation; this literary map creates the world it represents, as is the case for all such maps. Moreover, while maps are critical to the creation of Secondary Worlds, this notion of mapping—as in, establishing a framework—also speaks to this thesis’s overall aim: to map alternative frameworks of living and being an adolescent female body. In this way, mythopoeic fantasy texts (with maps) are themselves maps; they map new ways of being female. Maps are crucial to Secondary Worlds in that they serve to develop not merely the geography of the world but also the place itself and also because this reading of maps establishes a framework for my subsequent readings of bodies, readings that chart new bodily territories.

First, literary maps are paratextual material, as Gérard Genette ([1987] 2010) sets out in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Paratextual materials are, in general, the “accompanying productions” to a text that “surround it and extend it” (1). While Genette’s theory is somewhat limited to the materials actually printed on the text (author’s name, imprint, reviews, blurbs), I suggest that in the 21st century this paratextual material extends to include the, seemingly unlimited, ways of engaging with texts made possible through Internet technologies. For example, fanfiction (fanfic) is a paratextual material. It is a reading that Jonathan Gray’s (2010) *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* makes explicit. In this work, Gray extends Genette’s definition to suggest,

a ‘paratext’ is both ‘distinct from’ and alike—or [...] intrinsically part of—the text [...] paratexts are not simply add-ons, spinoffs, and also-rans: they create texts, they manage them, and they fill them with many of the meanings that we associate with them. (6)

The relationship between a text and its paratextual materials is one of continuity; paratextuality does not define a binary relationship between text/not text. Thus, paratextuality offers a way of considering the materials (texts themselves) that surround and extend a text as constituent to one another, as relating to, and developing, one another—this kind of modelling of interdependency is crucial to speaking from the place between oppositions and its appears throughout this thesis. Crucially, paratexts are about developing and

influencing the meaning of the whole story—or, the (Secondary) World, and they do so through relationships between various materials.

Thus, I use “Secondary World” in a very specific way: the Secondary World, as “places mean” suggests, is not just the *place* of fantasy; it is also that which metaphorically represents, or holds together, the story in all its many and disparate parts (Hunt 1987, 11). Because it is textual, Tamora Pierce’s Tortall Universe is the seventeen novels and the collection of short stories, *Tortall and Other Lands* (2011b), that comprise the “official” universe—that which is sanctioned, by Pierce and her publishers—but the Tortall Universe is also: Pierce’s interviews; the fan created fictions and works of art; the Tamora Pierce Wiki (“Tamora Pierce Wiki” 2016); the two casebooks: *Reading Tamora Pierce: The Immortals* (Lennard 2007) and *Reading Tamora Pierce: The Protector of the Small* (Lennard 2013); as well as *The Queen’s Readers: A Collection of Essays on the Words and Worlds of Tamora Pierce* (Diehl and Vaughn 2014). The Tortall universe is created by, as it creates, all its (para)textual materials. In this way, it is also this thesis.

While this premise of paratextuality allows for a host of material to be associated with, and thus to inform, the text, I want to focus on the introductory map—the map that serves to both invite the reader into the Secondary World and then to ground her within that world. Coming after any publication information and usually immediately preceding the story, these maps, as Genette ([1987] 2010) suggests, function as a threshold into the world. This pretextual map is illustrated by figure 2.1 (see page 98, above), with the map of Tortall on the left hand side (where, in the West, we typically start reading) and the narrative beginning—“that’s my decision”—on the right (1), the pretextual map visually offers a potential transition into the Secondary World, the world of the story. Moreover, this pretextual map also serves to facilitate the “meaning” of this place and to foreshadow the kind of story that might occur. Even before the “story” begins, the coastline, desert, hills, and mountains engender an expectation, not just as to the shape of the landscape but also as to what kind of story might follow—the story will not, the map suggests, include adventures into space, but it might include crossing a desert.

Finally, defining the “pretext” (specific paratextual materials that proceed the narrative proper) as “more than a boundary or a sealed border,” Genette ([1987] 2010) suggests, “the pretext is [...] a *threshold* [...] that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back” (1-2, emphasis original), Ekman (2013) makes a similar argument. This is key: mythopoeic YA fantasy—itself a liminal (threshold) literature—employs, when featuring pretextual maps, the liminal in order to effectively “invite the reader inside,” to offer the “possibility of [...] stepping inside.” Moreover, this concern with “inside” develops my earlier reading of YAL as a literature particularly concerned with “hailing” its audience (Althusser 1971, 163), a task here achieved through the pretextual map. Thus, mythopoeic YA fantasy—through being YAL and through including pretextual materials—doubly invites readers inside, an invitation that includes not just passively reading but also actively participating in the narratives, as fanfic evidences.

Returning to the issue at hand, these maps speak to, or indicate, what is known about a world. They depict—or create—the perceived shape of the world at the time of map-making, and they offer an apparent truth: the reality of the landscape they map. The same holds true for the developmental theories “mapping” adolescence and with the images of the “ideal” female body that pervade popular and media culture. These images “map” the expectations of, and for, femininity in that space. However, there is a blank space between the map and the thing mapped, and in this space, change may occur. It is an issue that *Mastiff* (2011a), book three of Pierce’s Beka Cooper trilogy, engages through a narration, a conversation regarding the “truth” (or accuracy), of a map.

Lady Sabine shook her head. ‘Do we look like coneys to you? Cooper’s map says the distance round this end of the marsh is forty miles back to the Rivers Road. It’s a map by the Crown’s own cartographers’

[...]

Ormer said, ‘A Crown what’s-it, you say. Mapmaking cove, he is? And he walked the ground himself in his pretty court slippers?’ (2011, 229)

There is an issue of authenticity—of the “real”—at stake in this exchange: a map

should represent the “real” land, and as this map was made by the “Crown’s own cartographer,” there is a heightened expectation regarding its authority—at least according to Lady Sabine of Macayhill, lady knight of the realm of Tortall.⁷⁴

In one respect, this is a reading bound up in issues regarding the “real” (see, also, Walsh 2002; 2013) and the naming of things—cartographer and mapmaking cove—that I develop in relation to Daine’s shape-shifting in Chapter Four. Here, I am concerned with the text’s preoccupation with illustrating the disjunction between the map(s) of a place—meant to illuminate, make known its truth—and the reality of that space, another kind of truth. For example,

‘When was it [Cooper’s map] done?’ Ormer asked [...] ‘We’ve had that much flooding these last three year. If your map be old, mayhap it’s missing as much as thirty square mile of marsh, give or take.’ (230)

Landscapes change, and while maps can also change, there is a (blank) space between the physical, geographical land and the map of it, a striking resemblance to the tension between the fleshy, physical adolescent body and conceptions of it. This is crucial for it models the kind of dissonance that may exist between the maps of adolescence (developmental theory) and the adolescent body. For example, how too might changes to the adolescent body or to the cultural situation of the adolescent affect the maps of adolescence? By introducing a provisionality to maps, these texts also question other truths, importantly, this is not to establish the physical geography, or the physical body, as more “real” or “true” than the maps of them; it is, rather, to illustrate how the space in-between the two offers the potential for change.

⁷⁴ Set nearly two hundred years prior to *The Song of the Lioness* quartet—in which Alanna cross-dresses in order to become a knight—the Beka Cooper trilogy concerns a period of Tortall’s history in which women could be both Provost’s Guards, as is Beka, as well as lady knights, as is Lady Sabine. Poignantly, this series also include a narrative in which “the cult of the Gentle Mother,” a religious movement positing women as “delicate souls” who are “too pure to dirty [themselves] with combat” (2009, 187), is coming into prominence. While the cult does not exist in Alanna’s period of Tortall history, its teachings laid the groundwork for woman’s exclusion from knighthood. For the Tortall Timeline, see Konst 2016.

Additionally, this discussion of a map, and of how the land it is meant to represent has changed (and the map has not), also participates in world building, an aspect of literary maps that Pierce's Tortall utilises to a great degree—through not just pretextual maps but also maps included (as image) within the text (as opposed to one positioned as pretext), narrations of maps, as well as inset maps. As Muehrcke and Muehrcke (1974) note, the creative aspect of literary maps is precisely their appeal: these maps, even more so than cartographic maps, “do [...] not reproduce reality” (317). They participate in the creation of one. As Pierce's Tortall is a fully formed Secondary World, maps—including discussions of maps and mapping—abound. In terms of developing the world, the narration of a magical map within *Squire* (2001), the fourth book of the Protector of the Small Quartet, is particularly useful.

During a hunt for bandits that have attacked, burned, and robbed a small village, Raoul (Kel's knightmaster and commander of the army, known as the King's Own) uses not a flat, two-dimensional map to track the bandits, but he—through magic—uses a map that reproduces in miniature the “actual” terrain of this fictive place.

Using the key, he drew a circle around the dot labelled *Owlshollow*. It included the bandits' last known location. When he closed the circle the map vanished. They were looking down at real terrain, forested hills, streams and rivers, marshes. Owlshollow appeared as a small town at the junction of two roads and a river. It was situated on rocky bluffs, protected on two sides from raiders who came by water. (75, emphasis original)

The magic charm (the “key”) transforms that which is encircled, in this case *Owlshollow*, into “real terrain.” Not only does the narration make it clear that a shift has occurred—“the map vanished”—but the change in italics suggests a shift from “the dot labelled” *Owlshollow* (indicated by italics) to the “real” thing (not italicised). This magical map quite literally (re)creates Owlshollow and its surrounding terrain, within narration. In other words, this map develops Tortall by appealing to the “real” (physical) place through the mapping of it, and it heightens this appeal through the magical (re)creation of the physical place. Moreover, this is a (re)creation. The narration both creates and recreates that which already exists (the physical place) while also creating it anew (that which

“they” see after “the map vanished”). Yet, and most importantly, all of this happens within narration; there is no “real” place that is mapped or (re)created; rather, the narration creates it all.

The exchange regarding the map of War Gorge Marsh and the use of the map of Owlshollow in the hunt for bandits also participates in the construction of Tortall and its neighbouring countries—by appealing to “actual” geography, with Raoul’s magical working going as far as (re)creating the narrated place in miniature (albeit still within narration). However, the literary map can only ever appeal to the reality that it appears to offer. Or, does it? Maps of Secondary Worlds create that which they claim—by being maps—to map. There is no Owlshollow, apart from the one(s) created by, and within, narration, thus, this narration, crucially using the device of a map, participates in world building. Moreover, this map is also particularly key to this thesis’s overall concern with refusing the superficiality of self-through-appearance in popular and media culture. The magically heightened topographical nature of this magical map contests the flatness of not just conventional, two-dimensional maps but also, by extension, the flatness—and superficiality—of the images by which the adolescent girl in popular and media culture constructs herself.

Finally, there is yet another kind of paratext worth including here: mythopoeic YA fantasy itself. Gray (2010) notes, while “a genre is not a paratext it can work paratextually to frame a text” (6). In many ways, the whole point of Chapter One and Two has been to construct mythopoeic YA fantasy (and the frames of YAL, myth and fantasy inherent therein) as paratextually informing, through a relationship of interdependency, the texts with which I am concerned. This is about a series of frames that surround and extend these texts: maps, myth, fantasy, YAL, and, even, popular and media culture, and it is about demonstrating the kind of topographical approach to the adolescent female body that the following chapters demonstrate, while taking into account instability and difference. In this light, this paratextuality speaks to not only a final aspect of world building—the linked nature of these texts offers a particular means of developing the world—but it also develops my approach to female adolescence (as it is offered within these texts): not only am I concerned with a topography of the adolescent female body that does not refuse lumps,

bumps, and scars, but I am also interested in refusing the individuality and isolation required of hegemonic models of self, a refusal that the linked nature of these texts demonstrates.

QUARTETS, A HARMONY IN PARTS

The mythopoeic YA fantasy with which I am concerned is not the single novel; these books exist as series, according to conventional YAL marketing terms—and with “conventional” there is a difficulty. In *Reading Series Fiction: From Arthur Ransome to Gene Kemp*, Victor Watson (2000) indicates that he employs series in order to describe “a sequence of related stories about the same groups of characters, usually by the same author” (6). In this sense, Pierce’s Tortall books and Meyer’s Lunar Chronicles are series. Yet, they are also not series, at least not entirely: the series implies a collection of stories—written in the same format and, often, by the same author—in which each instalment contains a fully resolved plot (see, also, Geraghty 1990, Watson 2000). While each of Pierce and Meyer’s texts meet the characteristics of the series, they also do *more* than this definition allows. In Pierce’s Tortall universe, the plots of each individual text do resolve at the text’s conclusion, but a larger narrative also resolves at the quartet’s end. Moreover, each text and each quartet, duology, or trilogy also contributes to the construction of the Tortallan universe. Thus, this section is concerned with exploring the linked multiplicity of these texts, while also considering how Pierce’s quartets, especially, diverge from conventional notions of series. Finally, while this linked multiplicity is crucial to world-building, it is also integral to reconceiving the adolescent girl in terms of relation—as opposed to isolating individuality, the model of self available in contemporary Western culture. In other words, the interdependency I read in relation to the texts mirrors the model of relation I call for in the Conclusions.

In his entry on “Series Fiction” for the *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature*, Victor Watson (2004) appears to categorically offer two distinct definitions of series: successive and progressive series. He even goes as far as claiming that “all series fiction is either progress or successive” (532), establishing a binary in the process. For Watson, “a

successive series is one in which the characters show few signs of growing older or changing in any significant way” (533). This kind of series is represented by: Nancy Drew (1930–2004) and Sweet Valley High (1983–2003) as well as “most of the series by Enid Blyton,” according to Watson (533). The progressive series, on the other hand, is much more visible in the twentieth century: Harry Potter (1991–2007), The Hunger Games (2008–2010), and Twilight saga (2005–2008), to name a few. With the narrative spanning a period of time that may, or may not, reflect the passage of time in consensus reality,

a progressive series is one in which a continuous and developing story is told in instalments, each book telling a different part of a sequential narrative, with the characters going older and more mature. (532)

This type of series readily lends itself to YAL, in its concern—if Trites’ (2000; 2001) definition holds—with the adolescent’s coming to terms with discourses of power, which is, in effect, a maturation narrative. In this way, Pierce’s Song of the Lioness quartet (1983–1988), Immortals quartet (1992–1996), Protector of the Small quartet (1999–2002), Daughter of the Lioness duology (2003–2004) as well as the Beka Cooper trilogy (2006–2011), alongside Meyer’s Lunar Chronicles (2012–2015) are progressive series. They do reflect the passage of time, and yet, they are also not, simply, progressive series.

The texts comprising Pierce’s Tortall Universe, in particular, do something more than this categorisation “progressive series” entails: they each exist independently but *also* interdependently. The category of progressive series cannot, in its focus on a singular developmental line, take this multiplicity into account, just as the singular, linear developmental line of adolescent theory cannot take female adolescence into account. To illustrate: Pierce’s Tortall universe currently exists as three quartets, a duology, trilogy and seven short stories. Each text exists independently but also interdependently, first within its quartet and more widely within the Tortall universe. Imperatively, this interdependency is not at the expense of individuality; rather, the linked nature of these texts allows individuality to flourish by deepening the specific through its engagement with the many. In other words, the universe is constructed through 12 distinct story lines; yet, each story line and each quartet (duology

and trilogy) also participates in the construction of the universe, each contributes to the whole, while the arcs are wholes themselves. In this way, the Tortall universe acts as a secondary series, or—and I believe more importantly—there are seventeen novels creating and developing a single Secondary World. In other words, the uneasiness of definition that I read in relation to YAL itself is echoed here in a resistance to categorisation.

In fact, Pierce's Tortall universe is quite preoccupied with establishing its collective existence: the covers of *Terrier* (2006), *Bloodhound* (2009) and *Mastiff* (2011a)—the three texts of the Beka Cooper trilogy—indicate that, for whatever else they may be, they are also "A Tortall Legend." In other words, each story is a legend contributing to the overall folklore, or story, of this place. Jan Harold Brunvand's (1998) description of a legend in *The Study of American Folklore* is particularly insightful in regards to just what this declaration of being "A Tortall Legend" might achieve. For Brunvand, "legends, the second largest category of traditional prose narratives, resemble myths in that they are stories regarded by their tellers as true," as such, they "are sometimes referred to as *folk history*" (196, emphasis original). The connection to history is particularly compelling, especially, to the *kind* of history—"myth"—with which Brunvand is interested. This is not the "legitimate" history of textbooks; it is the people's history, as told through the stories they share. The Beka Cooper books (as well as the other Tortall stories) are the folk history of Tortall, and they are the stories of Rebekah (Beka) Cooper. The Beka Cooper books constitute the stories of Tortall, some two hundred years before the stories of Alanna, Daine, Kel and Aly. Poignantly, Beka is the "six-times-great-grandmother" (2006, 6) of George Cooper, a main character in both *The Song of the Lioness* quartet and the *Daughter of the Lioness* duology. George is Alanna's husband.

Pierce's Tortall universe is a complex offering of interwoven narratives, which also suggests a second reason for the importance of this declaration of legend: in being legends of this world, the Beka Cooper trilogy writes itself into the Tortallan history, despite the distance between these "new" stories and the first Tortall books. Not only is there some two hundred years separating them

in terms of the Tortallan timeline,⁷⁵ but there are also twenty-eight years between the publications of *Alanna: The First Adventure* (1983) and *Mastiff* (2011a), Pierce's first and most recent Tortallan stories, respectively. In this way, the label legend is also about establishing a shared lineage between this new set of stories and the original, or first—analogous to Disney's (1950) citing of Perrault's version of the "Cinderella" tale as "the Original Classic."

Finally, in her concern with shape-shifting, Chappell (2007) refers to Pierce's Immortals quartet as a tetralogy, recognising the difficulty of referring to these works as series. Yet, I disagree with her choice of terminology. The three core stories: Alanna's, Daine's and Kel's are quartets, at least, as they are marketed in the United States and the United Kingdom. The inference of a quartet—in that a quartet is often conceived as group of four musicians, for example, playing a single song—speaks quite strongly to the world building role of multiple, linked texts. This notion of parts contributing to a single whole speaks to the creating of a Secondary World, through multiple parts: sheroes, magic, maps, and quartets—or linked multiplicity. The notion of quartet allows for an image of parts creating and contributing to a whole, without establishing one part as better, or more valuable, than another. In this way, the books themselves model an interdependency that refuses opposition.

In this sense, these texts do align to some degree with Christine Geraghty's (1990) notion of a soap opera, in as much as soap operas are often created to appear "as if life has been going on without us" (12). Though, I would not class them as serials, as serial does not take into account the nuanced nature of these worlds.⁷⁶ However, this "appearing as life has gone on" is particularly evident in the title of Meyer's series: *The Lunar Chronicles*, with chronicles suggesting that these events have been recorded, not created. This notion of recording is fundamental to the development of the Secondary World, and while Meyer's texts do it through being "chronicles," Pierce's texts suggest

⁷⁵ This can be found at: http://www.tamora-pierce.com/timeline_tortall.htm (Konst 2016).

⁷⁶ Pattee (2010) makes the case that soap opera, within YAL, is often akin to those early publisher's format series.

it quite clearly through, again, the maps (not to excluded the ways in which the narratives themselves develop this sense of community within the text).

The pretextual map in *Wild Magic* (1992)—the first text of the Immortals quartet, and more importantly the first story in Tortall taking place *after* Jonathan’s coronation at the end of the Song of the Lioness quartet—includes this note: “a Revised Map of the Kingdom of Tortall as commissioned by: Their Royal Majesties King Jonathan III and Queen Thayet in the 2nd Year of Their Reign” (n.p.), as figure 2.2 shows. Tolkien’s author-god did not create this map; the King and Queen *commissioned* it. In this way, these texts provide a snapshot of, or glimpse into, certain key moments within the world’s narrative. While participating in the development of the Secondary world, this world-building-through-multiple texts also contributes to how these texts invite the reader in to participate.

Secondary Worlds invite the reader into their space and story. This invitation inside also includes an offer to participate. In one sense, fantasy itself

is contingent upon a certain kind of participation: “unless one participates sympathetically in the ground rules of a narrative world, no occurrence in that world can make sense—or even nonsense” (Rabkin 1976, 4). Fantasy deals in the impossible through departures from consensus reality, and in doing so, it immediately asks a reader to participate: to accept its world, its

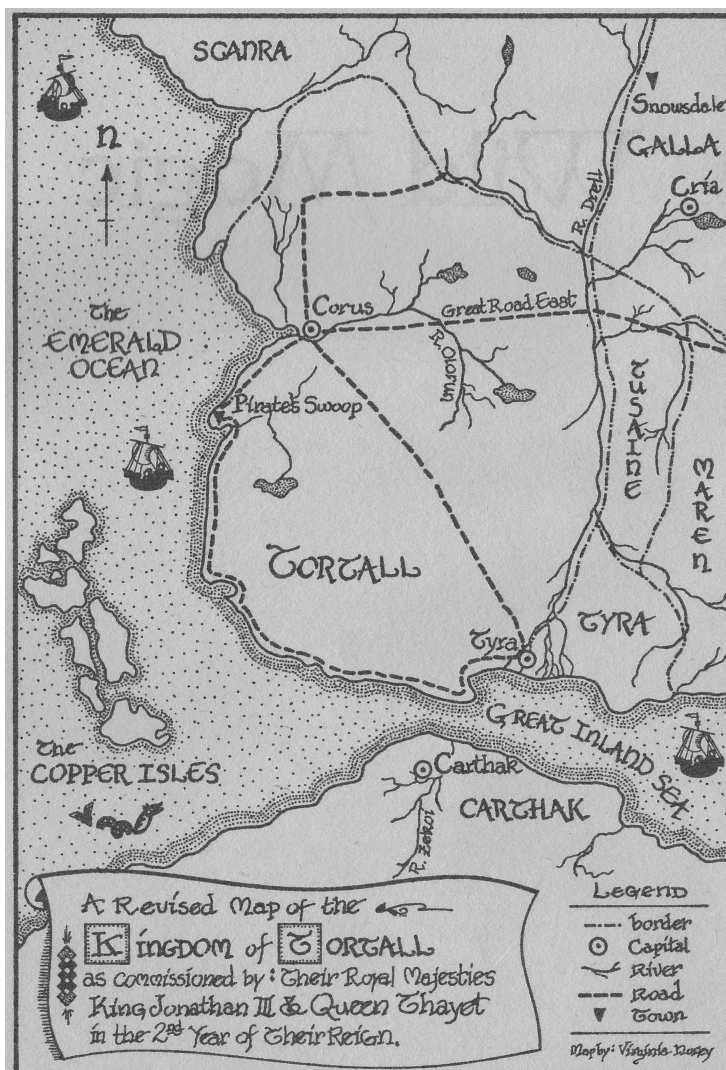


Figure 2.2 "Revised" Map of Tortall (Pierce 1992)

ground rules, its reality. It is for this reason that maps and quartets, or linked multiplicity of texts, are so important—both work to ground the reader within a world and to develop that world. Yet, this participation is not limited to the individual reader; for in existing as popular, formulaic—in as much as they speak to the hero pattern, which is, after all, a certain formula—literature, these texts “provid[e] [...] currency for conversation,” as Roger Sutton argues in terms of the Sweet Valley High novels (Pattee 2010, 24). Sutton’s reading of Sweet Valley High—and the notion holds true for my mythopoeic YA fantasy—constructs the novels as a point around which “communit[ies] of shared meaning” (3) may form, as noted in Pattee (2010) (see, also, Long 1985). Being a community of books is one of the key ways this mythopoeic YA fantasy serves as point around which communities may form.

Moreover, this “currency for conversation” and the “communities of shared meaning” also participate in a very particular kind of engagement with these texts: the activities of fandom. Mythopoeic YA fantasy is a vein of literature that receives a particularly large amount of attention online, and both Pierce’s and Meyer’s texts have extensive fandoms, spaces in which readers write fanfic, developing aspects of plot and create fanart, depicting their favourite characters. In doing so, fans effectively become another “Sub-creator” (1988, 98), just as Tolkien’s author-god creates the Secondary World, the fan creates the fandom of that world.

This premise is informed by two separate, though complementary, strands of thought: the, first, is Roland Barthes’ (1974) concept of the “writerly” text, a text open to interpretation, as opposed to the “readerly” text, one perceived as closed or complete; or, as Barthes notes, “a classic” (4). The second is Jenkins’ (2006) argument that through the mechanisms of “convergence culture” (2), consumers no longer passively receive media content, but they actively create it. In this sense, media refers to published content, including print, broadcast and digital. In this way, the two premises function together: the writerly text is a text open to participation, and it is through the mechanisms of convergence culture that adolescents—as the addressed reader of mythopoeic YA fantasy—actively participate in, actively engage, these texts.

Finally, this twofold reading of community—the linked multiplicity of these texts and how this, as well as other features, contributes to a notion of “inviting the reader in,”—is integral to this thesis’s overall concern. Mythopoeic YA fantasy texts offer models of adolescence that directly contest the hegemonic models of contemporary Western culture where individuality, uniqueness, and bodily perfection are the dominant paradigms of self. Mythopoeic YA fantasy offers images that contest those paradigms, and in doing so it offers models of being an adolescent female girl that the adolescent girl may take up—because of the interpellative aspect of YAL. The participation with the fantasy world, for example, through fandoms and social media, is vital because it demonstrates the viability of this taking up, but what exactly—in terms of the alternative images to those popular and media culture—are adolescent girls taking up?

CINDER: CINDERELLA IS A CYBORG

“I [Winter] have begun to wonder if perfection might be its own flaw.”
(Meyer 2015c, 513)

Opening with “[t]he screw through Cinder’s ankle had rusted” (2012, 1), Marissa Meyer’s *Cinder* wastes no time indicating that Cinder’s body is not the whole, human, fit body required of the adolescent girl by popular and media culture. It is not the body made available through the “assembly line beauty” of the makeover (Balsamo 1996, 58). In fact, this opening sentence undoes all those requirements: the “screw through her ankle” suggests the body is not whole, while also indicating that it is not, at least entirely, human. Her body is not fit, as in healthy, because this screw has “rusted,” a kind of failing, while the rust also insists that it is not fit, as in attractive. In short, Cinder’s body is not Cinderella’s; it is not the body of hegemonic fantasy. It is a body of difference. Moreover, it emphatically speaks to bodies existing outside of the text: my left hip was once held together with screws; there were many screws in the braces that straightened my teeth; I require contact lenses (or glasses) to see clearly; my left big toe currently hosts three pins. Cinder’s body—my body, as is also the case for many other bodies—has been “cut and sewed and pieced [...] together” (2013, 320). Cinder’s body heightens the complexity as it also comprises

“foreign steel limbs,” and there are “wires in her brain. Optobionics behind her retinas. Synthetic tissue in her heart, new vertebrae, [and] grafted skin to cover the scar tissue” (2013, 320). This is not the body of the makeover, and in so being, it is a body of difference. Cinder’s body is a body that directly contests the “ideal feminine beauty” produced through the mechanisms (cosmetic surgery and selfies) of the makeover paradigm (58) and crucially it does so by speaking to the very *real* bodies outside of the text. Thus, this section is concerned with bodies of difference, with making available bodies of difference in order to contest both the ideal heroic form as well as the hegemonic image—young, thin, fit—of femininity in popular and media culture.

One key way in which bodies of difference are suppressed is through the erasure, or minimising, of disability within the media images of contemporary culture, an argument that Rosemarie Garland-Thompson (2002) makes. Specifically looking at Aimee Mullins’ cover and spread for *Dazed and Confused* magazine in 1998, Garland-Thompson engages how the high-fashion images of Mullins within the magazine either erase, or “normalise,” difference: in one image, the curves of Mullins’ prosthetic legs simply accentuate the “womanly” curves of her pert bottom and breast, and in another, she is so heavily rendered as a doll-like creature that the prosthetics become hardly noticeable. In both images that Garland-Thompson discusses, Mullins is rendered over into the appropriate appearance of femininity. She is made glamorous. This is not the presentation of Cinder’s body, as my reading has made clear.

Thus, while I am not specifically interested in disability within this project, I am interested in bodies of difference, and as Garland-Thompson suggests

disability is a broad term within which cluster ideological categories as varied as sick, deformed, crazy, ugly, old, maimed, afflicted, mad, abnormal, or debilitated—all of which disadvantage people by devaluing bodies that do not conform to cultural standards. (5)

This devaluing of bodies of difference—bodies that “do not conform to cultural standards”—is very much of concern. As I discussed in Chapter One, this devaluing is at the core of the adolescent girl’s silencing within and between binary oppositions. In terms of this chapter, it is in how the heroic requirement

of bodily stability refuses woman as hero, and in Chapter Three, it is in a concern with the limiting nature of “pretty” as the ideal existence of adolescent girls. Narrations that make visible bodies of difference—bodies that are unstable, changeable and mechanical—are integral. For one, bodies are not homogenous, unchangeable and perfect. Bodies grow and break. Bodies change. Through including such bodies in narration, the privilege of beauty, healthy, and “normal” is questioned.

This “normal” body—better, ideal body—is one often produced through the makeover, surgical or otherwise, at least in as much as the makeover paradigm plays a considerable role in neoliberal practices of the self. Of this makeover, Susan Bordo (1993) suggests that it is not only contrived by the cosmetics industry—a source of hegemonic discourse, in my argument—but that it has also given rise to “fantasies of rearranging, transforming, and correcting, limitless improvement and change” on the body (245). Furthermore, the changes that are made—rather than embracing difference, not to mention the body’s fleshiness—seek to “defy [...] the historicity, the mortality, and indeed, the very materiality of the body” (ibid.). This is the body-cum-self in popular and media culture, especially as it is ubiquitously presented by the digital images shared on social media. Thus, I briefly want to establish the makeover paradigm in terms of Cinderella in order to more fully demonstrate how Cinder, as a cyborgian Cinderella, diverges from that patterning.

To start, Cinderella’s makeover, the fairy-godmother-wrought transformation in which Cinderella’s appearance is made suitable for attending the ball, as this serves as an example of the archetypal makeover upon which the paradigm is modelled. In Disney’s *Cinderella(s)*—the 1950 animated *and* the 2015 live-action film—Cinderella’s makeover occurs after the destruction of the resourcefully altered dress at the hands of her stepsisters (Anastasia and Drizella) and Lady Tremaine. Crucially, while the mice and birds created the dress in the 1950 film, Cinderella, with their minimal assistance, makes the dress herself in the 2015 version. This minor alteration speaks to the neoliberal narratives of self (in that Cinderella makes the dress herself) underpinning the newer film’s discursive space, while also recapitulating the work essential to the feminine identity offered in, and by, the 1950 version. Nevertheless, in both

films, Cinderella rushes to the garden in tatters and tears, only to be saved by the magical assistance of her fairy godmother. While within the 1950 version, there is a strong insistence that this “saving” occurs because Cinderella still believes (she still dreams, despite “how her heart is grieving”), it is the makeover, and Fairy Godmother’s role in actualising that transformation, with which I am here concerned.⁷⁷

In many respects, this makeover is about the heightened fantasy femininity discussed earlier: while Cinderella is made suitable for attending the ball, both in terms of her consequence (coach, horses, coachman, footman) as well as, and most importantly, her appearance (“Good Heavens, child! You can’t go in that!”), the transformation is magical and its result is fantastical. It is “heightened fantasy femininity” (Cochrane 2014), a point made even more clearly in Disney’s 2015 offering. In what can only be termed a sparkle-mation, Helena Bonham Carter initiates the makeover sequence by transforming herself from crone to Fairy Godmother, and the sparkles continue to abound.⁷⁸ They accompany the transformation of pumpkin into coach, mice into horses, lizards into footman, and goose into coachman, culminating in a surreal, dreamlike sequence in which Ella is encased, rather womblike, in a profusion of sparkles—for thirty-five seconds, a veritable eternity. This is the “belly of the whale” moment from classic mythological patterns rearticulated for woman as the sparkle, the marker of the makeover’s transformative power (Campbell [1949] 1973, 90). This is where Ella’s old self effectively dies, so that she may be (re)born appropriately feminine.

Directly contrasting Cinderella’s “belly of the whale” moment, Cinder spent eight years “in a tank, sleeping and dreaming and growing” whilst doctors intermittently operated to repair the injuries she received in the fire set to kill her—missing left leg and hand, burned right arm, shoulder, and cheek, as well as injuries to her spine, heart and eyes (2013, 320 and 324). In this way,

⁷⁷ Within both (1950 and 2015) of Disney’s *Cinderella* films, the fairy godmother is named Fairy Godmother, thus literalising the archetypal figure.

⁷⁸ Moseley (2002) offers an excellent reading on the use of the sparkle in relation to teen films, especially poignant is how the sparkle serves as both a “signifier of glamour, of superficial beauty” and as a marker of feminine power (407).

Cinder's body is not the fit and able body both required, and produced, by the makeover paradigm. It is not only fragmented and scarred, and thus seemingly unfit for the purposes of neoliberal selfhood, but it also engages technology in a way that has ramifications for both subjectivity and femininity. Cinder also serves as a counterpoint to the model of "being female" offered by Disney's Cinderella, a model that is tied to (male) hero patterns and to the femininity allowed within that frame. In its divergence, this reading also serves as an example of how the remainder of this thesis engages the hero story (dominant, hegemonic narratives of self) through narratives of sheroes, females who are heroes despite—and because of—bodily instability.

Finally, Cinder's feminine identity is bound up in her cybernetic (fragmented) body. It is bound up in the technology that saved it, and in so being, *The Lunar Chronicles* present a complex commentary on Western culture's obsession with appearance. While Cinder's narrative does offer a direct rearticulation of Cinderella's Fairy Godmother enabled "sparkle-mation," a look at how *The Lunar Chronicles* contest the "assembly-line beauty" of cosmetic surgery is particularly useful for illustrating just how Cinder, and *The Lunar Chronicles* more widely, offer a different image of femininity (Balsamo 1996, 58).

As an ideal mechanism of the makeover paradigm, cosmetic surgery is, for Balsamo (1996), where "'difference' is made over into sameness" (58). With this surgery, the medical image, as a means of "discipline[ing] the unruly female body" is a key area of her concern (56). Of this image, Balsamo suggests

it is not so much the inner or essential woman that is visualized; her interior story has no truth of its own. Both her surface and her interiority are flattened and dispersed. Cosmetic surgeons use technological imagining devices to reconstruct the female body as a signifier of ideal feminine beauty. (57–58)

I am specifically concerned with the flattening and dispersion that occurs with this image: with how the body's curves and contours, not to mention this interior story, are refused. Moreover, within this image, the body has no meaning; it merely signifies this ideal. In popular and media culture, the medical image is no longer the sole mechanism of this process. In this space, the selfie

serves in the same disciplining role, but with a twist: through photo editing software, endless improvement can be enacted on the body, and it is not the “cosmetic surgeon,” the medical professional, who enacts these changes, it is the girl herself: the adolescent girl uses “technological imagining devices to reconstruct” herself as *pretty*, the ideal of this space. Moreover, she does so *without* the scars that trouble cosmetic surgery—reaching a zenith of flattening in the process. Scars are crucial; as a kind of writing on the body, they refuse the flattening inherent in these images. The absence of scars—the story of the body—makes “sameness” all the more pervasive. The Lunar Chronicles not only contest the flatness of images but it does so by specifically making scars—evidence of where and how the body has been pieced together—available.

As Balsamo suggests and the selfie demonstrates, images often simply (re)offer a superficial perspective of the body, securing a reliance on the visual and bolstering the centrality of appearance. However, they are not always so, a point that an image—a holographic medical image—of Cinder makes clear.

It was as if someone had chopped her down the middle dividing her front half from her back half, and then put her cartoonish image into a medical textbook. Her heart, her brain, her intestines, her muscles, her blue veins. Her control panel, her synthetic hand and leg, wires that trailed from the base of her skull all the way down her spine and out to her prosthetic limbs. The scar tissue where flesh met metal. A small dark square in her wrist—her ID chip. (2012, 82)

While this medical image demonstrates a keen neoliberal sense of self-awareness in its fracturing of Cinder’s body—“chopping her down the middle”—and its cataloguing of her body parts—“heart,” “brain,” “intestines,” and so on—it also does something different: this image makes “scar tissue” visible.

Not only have “flesh” and “metal” met, but the flesh and metal are held together as one within this image. They are held together by the “scar tissue” linking the component parts, a joining that is antithetical to the ideals of contemporary Western culture. There is unity in this fragmentation. This holographic image of Cinder directly contests the flat medical image of cosmetic surgery and the selfie, as well as the many other images—magazine covers and advertisements—proliferating superficiality. This medical image is different,

and it refuses flatness in two ways: it not only makes visible the scars, thus refusing flatness within the image, but it is also a hologram; it is three-dimensional, thus refusing the flatness of the image itself. In this way, this image is *not* the medical image with which Balsamo engages; it is, rather, something else. It is an image that makes visible fragmentation in order to expose unity (“scar tissue”) in that fragmentation and to contest flatness.

In *The Lunar Chronicles*, there are two ways in which this contestation occurs: through animal-human as well as machine-human hybrids. The first is most visible in terms of Levana’s mutant soldiers, genetically modified Lunars who are now part wolf. In fact Wolf—the nickname for Ze’ev Kesley—is quite literally transformed into a human-wolf hybrid.

He could feel the difference in his protruding mouth, his enlarged teeth, his malformed jaw. They’d altered his facial bone structure, making way for the row of implanted canine teeth. There was a new curvature to his shoulders and an awkward flex of his feet, which looked more like paws now, made for running and bounding at great speeds. His hands were enormous now, fixed with reinforced, claw-shaped fingernails. (2015c, 561)

While foreshadowing issues that arise around Daine’s shape-shifting, this transformation of Wolf into a “wolf” is striking, especially given the descriptions: “protruding,” “malformed,” “awkward” that suggest just how “unnatural,” for him, this change is (434). This transformation is also a deviation from the “cultural standards” of this world, and in so being, difference is made available in narration. The mutant wolf soldiers offer visibly fragmented bodies, bodies that are comprised of multiple parts.

Unity in fragmentation—or the ironic homogenisation of human and machine, as Donna Haraway (1991) conceives the cyborg body—is imperative. The cyborg body and the bodies of these mutant wolf soldiers, “do not,” as Haraway suggests, “resolve into larger wholes, even dialectically, [they are] about the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and true” (149). These bodies do not resolve into larger wholes because they are about allowing and making space for bodies that demonstrate “mutation, variation and becoming” (Seaman 2007, 247). This is also exactly my point regarding YAL itself: YAL is a literature in-between; it does not resolve

into the larger whole of children's literature or (adult) literature. Rather, YAL, because of its in-betweenness, demonstrates aspects of both, while also maintaining—*through* this multiplicity—its uniqueness. Cinder, and also the mutant soldiers, is precisely who she is because of the "incompatible things" comprising her body, and this multiplicity is crucial, particularly, the scars that evidence it. The scars are important because they bear witness to change; they bear witness to our life experiences, a reading that Winter, the heroine of *Winter* (Meyer 2015), makes explicit.

In a "world of perfection" (2015c, 25), "*the young princess was as beautiful as daylight. She was more beautiful even than the queen herself*" (1, formatting original). Winter—a refiguring of Snow White who is "fairest of them all" (Disney 1937)—is the "young princess." She is also Queen Levana's stepdaughter, and while she is "beautiful," she is also, according to this world's "cultural standards," flawed.

She dipped her head, turning to hide the three scars on her right cheek. For years, Winter had assumed that when people stared at her, it was because the scars disgusted them. A rare disfigurement in their world of perfection. (2015c, 25)

"Rumor[ed] to have "been inflicted by the queen [Levana] herself" (2014a, 524),⁷⁹ these scars set Winter apart from other Lunars, not least because she refuses to use her glamour—or even makeup, "she did not let them put any makeup on her—not even to cover the scars" (2015c, 150)—to alter her appearance, to hide them. The scars are a kind of writing of the body's history on its surface. Crucially, I am not calling for intentional, self-inflicted harming in this interest with scars. Yet, as self-harm is a pervasive issue faced by many adolescent girls within contemporary Western culture, this reading does not take those scars lightly. Here, I am concerned with scars as a record and with

⁷⁹ A rumour confirmed as truth in *Winter* (2015c),

She [Levana] should have killed her [Winter] when she'd ordered Winter's hand to take that knife, when she'd thought for sure a slight disfigurement would erase all the whispers in the court, all the talk of her thirteen-year-old-stepdaughter already vying for *most beautiful girl on Luna*. (513, emphasis original).

how a making visible of scars in narration offers a re-mapping of the contours of the body. I also do not want to offer scars as the only possible means of this re-mapping; rather, scars hold a particular interest because of their raised nature and because, in Cinder's case, they demonstrate a kind of interdependency, a relationship between her fleshy, physical body and her cybernetic body parts.

Fittingly, in Pierce's Tortall universe and Meyer's Lunar Chronicles, scars abound: Cinder's "scar tissue where flesh met metal" (2012, 82); Alanna receives "a scar from [her] neck to [her] abdomen, right between [her] breasts," after battling the God of the Roof for his Dominion Jewel (1988, 134). She and Jon both also receive scars as part of the initiation ritual when they join The Bloody Hawk, a Bazhir tribe (a nomadic people inhabiting Tortall's Great Southern Desert) (see, also, 1986, 26). Kel's scars—and bruises—are frequently mentioned, for example, "Your back is covered with bruises [...] And your arms and hands are scarred" (2001, 116 – 117), as several ladies notice when Kel visits the communal baths after a session of jousting with Raoul, her knight-master. After battling Ozorne (former king of Carthak) during the culmination of his attempt to invade and takeover Tortall, Ganel (god, the Dream King) says to Daine, "*You will have scars [...] but those are signs of battles fought bravely*" (259, formatting original). This including scars within narration serves a twofold purpose: first, the scars themselves contest the flatness of appearance with which I have been concerned and second, the including of something that contests the dominant paradigm serves to make normal that which is considered abnormal. In this way, the scars participate in re-mapping.

Through Winter's scars, this "making normal" concerns the countering of perfection, an idea that the opening epigraph foreshadows, "I have begun to wonder if perfection might be its own flaw" (2015c, 513). This perfection is one centred on appearance—on appearing perfect, flawless, beautiful—and it is a mind-set that dominates both Luna, the home of Lunars, as well as popular and media culture, and it is one that depends on the "flatten[ing] and dispers[ion]" and on the erasure of difference through "assembly-line beauty" that I discussed through Balsamo's working on medical imaging and in relation to selfies (1996, 58). Scars are not flat—"she traced a finger over the raised flesh"—and as such, they refuse that flattening, dispersion, erasure and homogeneity of appearance

(2015c, 625).⁸⁰ Yet, Cinder's and Winter's bodies, as well as Alanna's, Kel's and Daine's, foreground all of these issues: their bodies include difference and disability, and in so doing, this ironic body expands the (feminine) positions available for occupation, as the offering of such bodies is about providing alternative images of living and being an adolescent female body. In the case of Cinder and Winter, a body that is not necessarily whole, fit, or stable—though it is still able.

* * *

Popular and media culture and mythopoeic YA fantasy literature are competing discursive spaces, but while different, both mark and are marked by the other. The adolescent and the hero have been the primary focus of this reading since both the heroic figure—with whose journey myth is concerned—and the adolescent girl—who, as youth, is tied to the hero paradigm—face a requirement of bodily stability that is both limiting and exclusionary. Moreover, it is a reading that has shown the two figures, hero and adolescent, as effectively one and the same, a point made quite tellingly when considering that the first hero pattern research was taking place in Europe (Rank 1909),⁸¹ while G. Stanley Hall was defining adolescence in America (Hall 1904).

The hero is adolescent. The hero-journey essentially describes the liminal transition of a child becoming a man (who is hero). The problem: both popular and media culture as well as traditional mythic narrative, posit the male form—as well as concomitant bodily stability, wholeness and perfection—as their ideal. Moreover, both discourses use this ideal, which has taken on the appearance of truth, in order to refuse bodily multiplicity, change, and

⁸⁰ The touch, in “she traced,” is an issue that I return in Conclusions, as touch offers an additional, beyond sight, means of perceiving the body, and in so doing potentially lessens the dominance of visibility.

⁸¹ The folklorist Alan Dundes notes that J.G. van Hahn, an Austrian Philologist, probably initiated “modern hero pattern research” with his “Arische Aussetzungs-und-Rückkehr-Formel” (“The Aryan Expulsion and Return Formula”). Van Hahn’s text was published posthumously in 1876. See, Dundes (1990).

difference thereby excluding the adolescent female who is, through that biological determinism marking her as both adolescent and adolescent-becoming-woman, bodily multiplicity and change.

In this chapter, Cinderella, especially Disney's adaptations of the figure and Meyer's reworking of her, has served as a frame to illustrate both how females fare under the hegemonic hero narrative and how that positioning might be changed. Disney's adaptation of Cinderella offers a femininity underscored by appearance, appropriate work, and dreaming. While there are some positives to the construction—Cinderella is a "loving caregiver" (Wood 1996, 35)—the image is rather dated, as one recent commentary on the film—a "Princess Rap Battle"—puts it,

Your tale as old as time
Sets us back 50 years—
Do your chores, clean the floors
'Til a man just appears! (Avalon 2015, n.p.)

Cinderella is both timeless and also of her time—it was just over a decade after Disney's 1950 offering that Betty Friedan (1963) published *The Feminine Mystique*, calling attention to the ideal construction of femininity at that time: a pretty home and self. For me, the way in which Cinderella both continually reappears—recognisable as Cinderella but also changed—and is linked to a feminine identity, to what it means to be woman, is pivotal. Thus, it is not that Cinderella herself is inherently problematic. It is, rather, how the makeover narrative, exemplified by Disney's *Cinderella*(s—both 1950 and 2015), has become a paradigm underscoring seemingly all aspects of living and being a female body that is vexatious.

This paradigm, particularly for girls, in popular and media culture limits the positions available for occupation, the feminine identities available. The heightened fantasy femininity offered by the Disney Princesses and made available to little girls at venues such as the Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutiques is

limited.⁸² The choice available is limited. However, in that Cinder's story is not only *not* a recapitulation of the makeover narrative typified by conventional Cinderella narratives, and that her body, the fundamental element of that narrative, exists directly in opposition to the whole, fleshy, fit body that the makeover produces, there is scope for change. Cinder's body is a body comprised of parts, of mechanical, inorganic parts, and it is the negotiation of this relationship that constructs Cinder's subjectivity, her feminine identity, within this world—while also offering not just a position to occupy, but also, arguably, the possibility of positions.

Conventional mythic narratives (through the hero) and discourses of popular and media culture (through the images of celebrity and air-brushed perfection) insist upon a very particular image of woman: thin, long and flowing hair as well as appearing youthful, including a pert bottom and breasts. The adolescent girl's becoming-woman depends on a successful shape-change in order to achieve this appearance of woman; in order to be woman, she must appear as woman. Yet, the image resists the bodily change that marks the adolescent girl as adolescent: body hair must be removed, hips cannot widen "too much," the ideal breast shape is very narrow. For these reasons, the following chapter takes issues with appearance, with the assumption that appearance can, or should, mark one as feminine (that is to say woman) as well as with the assumed one-to-one relation between self and appearance that is implicit in this positioning. The chapter is concerned with how this dominance of appearance, and of appearing, might be loosened, if images of bodily instability, change, and difference are made available.

Finally and briefly, the following two chapters engage the methods and frameworks of psychoanalysis *not* because I see this as a project of psychoanalysis; rather, it does so because myth and psychoanalysis have been made to be inseparable, and this thesis is concerned with myth and mythopoeic YA fantasy. The foundational works of hero studies—Rank (1909), Raglan (1936), and Campbell (1949)—employ psychoanalysis. Bettelheim (1976)

⁸² These boutiques are magical places where mothers and fathers (or other, presumably adult, persons with money) can, for the right amount, give young girls a day of pampering as their favorite Disney princess.

offers a psychoanalytic approach to fairy tale and Bascom (1954), in his concern with its *functions*, offers the same for folklore. Similarly, Campbell (1968) contends, “mythology serves four functions” (609). Briefly, these are: the metaphysical, the cosmological, the sociological, and the psychological, with the hero’s function being primarily the latter (609–624), and in its concern with mythopoeic YA fantasy, this thesis focuses on the hero. Thus, as does psychoanalysis, this thesis seeks to see below, or more than, the surface of things and it does so from the silenced positions between binary oppositions. Mythologists and folklorists employ the lens of psychoanalysis because its methods and frames provide a way into the questions of myth, of life. Who are we? What happens when we die? Where did this world come from? Thus, Chapter Three, in its concern with contesting the images of popular and media culture, and Chapter Four, in its concern with contesting discourse, also utilise psychoanalytic frames.

CHAPTER THREE

APPEARANCES MAY BE DECEIVING

Christine Battersby (1988) argues that woman is phenomenal in a “double sense,” and while the first celebrates the “wonderful” nature of a phenomenon (1), it is the second sense with which I am concerned: “she’s also just a surface deviation; mere ‘appearance,’ unrepresentative of that distinctive, underlying ‘essence’ of humanity that philosophers have associated with ‘truth’” (1). In this figuring, she (woman) is the object, or surface, to *his* subject(ive self). Moreover, woman is not just that which is superficial—a positioning that is limiting enough, as it refuses her “essence”—she is also “surface deviation.” She is “mere[ly] appearance,” and the appearance—that she is—deviates from the norm or standard. The norm is bodily wholeness and stability, as the hero (man) represents. In popular and media culture, this “being appearance” is articulated as a representational economy of self-through-appearance that uses the status of “deviation” to require, what Wolf (1991) terms, “beauty work” (16). Through this work on the body, woman becomes feminine, and thus a self, within dominant hegemonic regimes.

Moreover, this paradigm of female self through appearing feminine excludes other possible ways of being woman. As Bartky (1988) suggests

normative femininity is coming more and more to be centered on woman’s body—not its duties and obligations or even capacity to bear children, but it’s sexuality, more precisely, its presumed heterosexuality and its appearance. (80)

This is the beginning—“is coming more and more”—of the narrative arc that has resulted in the representational economy of self-through-appearance that exists in popular and media culture. As Gill (2007) suggests, “in today’s media, possession of a ‘sexy body’ is presented as women’s key (if not sole) source of identity” (149). The distance between identity and appearance has collapsed. You are a (heterosexual) woman if you appear as such, if you appear “sexy.” Gill also notes the neglect of markers such as “caring, nurturing or motherhood” in constructions of femininity (149). It is transition reflected in my above reading

of Cinderella: Disney's 1950 animation includes "loving caregiver" within its depiction of the femininity Cinderella offers, while also offering the appearance, "beautiful" and "innocently sexy," that has only intensified since (Wood 1996, 35). Gill's (2007) "today's media" culture is the hegemonic discursive space of contemporary popular and media culture, and it is within this space that a "sexy body" is "women's key (if not sole) source of identity" (149). This is what the adolescent girl faces as she becomes—as she shape-changes into—woman.

Thus, this chapter is concerned with appearance, with the problems implicit in relying on appearance for determining the self, specifically, with how such an over-reliance on appearance limits—through refusing bodily change, multiplicity, and difference—ways of being bodies. The first section lays out this premise: the superficiality inherent in popular and media culture refuses not only other ways of being woman but also nuances of the body that go beyond its surface, while also indicating that the "beauty work" required of woman silences multiplicity and difference. It also establishes the context for four case studies focusing on cross-dressing, the Lunar glamour, pregnancy and shape-shifting. These case studies offer images of bodily instability, multiplicity and change that contest and complicate dominant, hegemonic expectations of appearance. Taken from the texts of Pierce's *Tortall Universe* and Meyer's *Lunar Chronicles*, these readings of a brother and sister sharing one appearance (cross-dressing), the Lunar glamour, pregnancy (made possible by menstruation) and shape-shifting show appearance as an unreliable marker of the self, while also expanding what it means to be a body that appears. In so doing, they open a space in which popular and media culture's representational economy may be questioned.

SUPERFICIALITY IN POPULAR AND MEDIA CULTURE: "I'M A BRAND"

"Status Update." The topic under discussion on the 573rd edition of *This American Life*, an American radio programme currently hosted by Ira Glass (2015), is the ever-prevalent "status update," and while Glass claims that the "program is about status updates of various kinds—the literal kind, like on Instagram," he also says,

but most of our show today is about the kind of slow changes in status that happen to adults [...] where what happens is, you know, quiet, and slow, and really, is sometimes kind of rude to talk about. (n.p)

In principal, the show has nothing to do with teenagers or adolescents, and yet, it opens with “three teenage girls explain[ing] why they are constantly telling their friends they are beautiful on Instagram” (2015), and it does so because these teenage girls experience—through, as Glass argues, the posts they make on Instagram—a kind of perpetual “status update.” This online, digital bubble of Instagram (Julia, one of the three girls suggests, “People are always on Instagram. Everyone’s always on Instagram”) offers a highly concentrated, and sometimes contentious, space in which status updates occur at such a frequency that often very little has actually changed, in the sense of “slow changes” Glass posits adults as experiencing (n.p.).

As Julia (aged 13), Jane (14), and Ella (14) demonstrate, the status update becomes—for the adolescent girl—a continuous marking off of the self as it is meeting (sometimes not) the expectations of appearance within the discursive space of popular and media culture. When the girls get it right, “130 to 150 likes [...] and anywhere between 20 and 50 comments,” comments that are “overwhelmingly [...] super-positive, you’re so pretty, OMG, you’re so cute” (n.p). When they get it wrong, “other girls will take screenshots to save the image and gossip about it later” (n.p). Not only is the extent of response staggering but so too is the polarity. The image, most often a selfie, is either “right” or “wrong”—there is no middle ground.

This heightened performance of self-through-image creates a situation in which girls must consciously take control of their own self-image, also required by neoliberal narratives of self. While such self-creation is not inherently bad, the self as image—the way in which that image is communicated (constant attendance to Instagram and other social media sites) and the very narrow image that is required—is constraining. An exchange between Julia and Ella makes this clear:

Julia It’s like—I’m a brand, and I am like—
Ella You’re trying to promote yourself.

Julia The brand. I'm the director of the— (n.p, emphasis original)

To which Glass supplies, “and you're the product.” This is the narrative of self offered by celebrities—Taylor Swift, Rhianna, the Kardashians, who are obviously products—wrought in the lives of ordinary girls. As teenagers experiencing their first few weeks of high school, Julia, Jane and Ella are representative of the norm, of the normal means of being girl in the West.

In this space, the self we cultivate is most obviously evidenced by the digital image, the selfie. Katie Warfield (2014a) discusses how girls take streams of selfies and how as they “curate the images,” they delete the ones they do not like, keeping the ones they do. For Warfield, the kept—and posted—images are the ones in which the girl perceives herself as “looking good,” and it is this self perception that Warfield finds provocative. However, Warfield fails to take into account the homogeneity of the images, a homogeneity that is heightened within the social media bubble within which these young girls exist. For these girls, this image is not about personal choice, or personal views of “looking good;” it is entirely about meeting expectations.

We all ask people before we post it [a selfie], like send in like a group chat, or like, send to your friends, like, should I post this? Do I look pretty? (Glass 2015, n.p.)

“Do I look pretty?” Looking pretty is what matters, because looking pretty is what is required by the discourse of self-through-selfie—a particular kind, or way of, appearing. Despite Warfield's arguments, this discourse of looking pretty is not only the dominant discourse but it is one so entrenched within the (un)reality of the selfie (this image is always edited and manipulated, an illusion) that the selfie's salvation, its reconfiguration as a tool of empowerment, is impossible. The “selfie” is a deeply rooted, hegemonic discourse, and as its practices and paradigms require a limited way of being in this world, it is a mechanism of the girl's silencing and exclusion.

Finally, while this insistence on her superficiality—as in, she is “mere ‘appearance’” (Battersby 1998, 1)—has reached a particular apex in the discursive space of popular and media culture, especially in those areas concerning females, this reliance on the visual is not new, as I discussed in

Chapter One and Two. Yet, in mythopoeic YA fantasy, despite—or perhaps because of—being entwined with these dominant discourses of the body, there are bodies not limited to surface-ness. Cross-dressing (Pierce’s *Song of the Lioness* quartet), the Lunar glamour (Meyer’s *Lunar Chronicles*), pregnancy throughout Pierce’s *Tortall Universe*, and shape-shifting (*Immortals* quartet) all demonstrate—in varying ways—that the body is much more complex than merely something that appears.

CASE STUDIES

Femininity (what it means to be a woman) relying solely on the body’s surface, on one appearing feminine, does not work. Not only does it *not* work because it is a superficial rendering of being woman—at the expense of other possible ways of being (Gill 2007)—but also because self is much more complex than the figuring allows. The body can be misread, as Megan Friedman (2015) makes explicit when she discusses, for *Cosmopolitan*, the model Rain Dove. Noting, Rain’s “height and facial features often get her mistaken for a man or a transgender woman” (n.p.). This misreading also applies to the pregnant body. Is it ever safe (or polite) to ask a woman if she is pregnant? The body can also be deliberately altered—through means as dramatic as cosmetic surgery—and disguised—through means as ordinary as makeup. Moreover, and as I have discussed, the body itself changes, and according to the discursive space of contemporary popular and media culture (with roots much earlier), this is especially true for adolescent female bodies. Thus, the following case studies are images of bodily instability that contest, or complicate, the dominant hegemonic discourse of self-through-appearance.

Thus, the following case studies are concerned with the way in which instances of bodily instability, or uncertainty, offer ways out of the trap of appearance that is not only engendered by the visibility—or specularization, as Irigaray ([1974] 1985) terms it—of popular and media culture but also by the by the mythic tradition—with its ideal, heroic form—underscoring the mythopoeic nature of these texts, a reading I make clear in this chapter’s

concluding concern with seeing through, or more than, the surface. Such a seeing makes more than just the body's surface available for determining self.

Little Boys and Little Girls: Is There a Difference?

Freud ([1933] 1973) claims, "when you meet a human being, the first distinction you make is 'male or female'?" (146), and this distinction is made—and has always been made—through sight, through seeing the publicly available body. However, there are two issues within this positioning that I find disputable. First, the lack of acknowledgement that it is not that the body speaks some truth of itself through being viewed; it is, rather, that "you" make a assumption, based on expectations of appearance. The body is male or female because of the male or female "you" expect to see. This is, however, not just an deciding of sex, which is problematic enough. As I demonstrate through narrations of Alanna's cross-dressing, there is also an assumption of humanity ("human beings") within this hegemonic, patriarchal "distinction," and of what a human is, not animal or artificial (not machine). Moreover, Western rationality, of which Freud's work is a part, would see Alanna and Thom as two distinct selves—because they inhabit two distinct bodies. However, through being twins and children, Alanna and Thom appear as one; they appear as Thom, a reading the text reinforces by coding Alanna as masculine. Alongside this appearing as one, this section is concerned with Alanna and Thom's physical similarities—because they are twins and children—and the physical differences that will one day appear—because Alanna is female.

Tamora Pierce's (1983) *Alanna: The First Adventure* opens with the Lord Alan of Trebond informing his two children—the twins, Alanna and Thom—that they are to "leave for the convent, and [...] the palace" (2), in order to begin training for their adult roles. Because she is female, Alanna is to be a lady (wife and mother) and Thom a knight, a role made possible by his being male (and of a certain social rank). However, the twins—specifically Alanna—have other plans.

"Tomorrow he gives us the letters for the man who trains the pages and the people at the convent. You can imitate his writing, so you can do new

letters, saying we're twin boys. You go to the convent [...] And I'll go to the palace and learn to be a knight!' (2)

Effectively, the twins plan to trade places—only, for Alanna, it is not a straightforward swap. For Thom, the plan is quite simple: he will pretend to be Alanna until they have left the family grounds, but as “younger *sons* [...] could go first to the convent, then to the priests' cloisters, where they studied religion or sorcery,” his deception is minimal (7, my emphasis). Alanna, however, will remain disguised—or cross-dressed—for years, and she does not just pretend to be Thom. She becomes Alan, a boy training to become a knight.

This becoming first Thom and then Alan is made possible throughout the quartet in a number of ways. Here, I am concerned with the appearance that is shared between this brother and sister, and with how being twins and children Alanna's cross-dressing is possible—being a twin *and* a child construes her as looking like her brother. Thus, Alanna's cross-dressing or—this “crazy idea” (2), as Thom anticipates it to be—is made possible owing to appearance, to the physical appearance that as twins Alanna and Thom share.

The only difference between them—as far as most people could tell—was the length of their hair. In face and body shape, dressed alike, they would have looked alike. (1)

Their bodies are the same. The things that, in the present of narration, differentiate Alanna and Thom are superficial: “length of hair” and clothes. Once her hair is cut and her clothes changed, Alanna “look[s] enough like Thom to fool anyone but Coram,” who also looks after the children and who accompanies Alanna-as-Thom-becoming-Alan to the palace (9).

Yet, while integral, the twin-ness is not enough, the foundation of similarity that initially makes Alanna's cross-dressing possible also depends upon their being children, as being children also contributes to Alanna's “look[ing] enough like Thom” (9). In other words, Alanna has not yet experienced the bodily changes of puberty that would see her “turn into a girl—you know, with a chest and everything” (2), and in this way, the text recapitulates Freud's ([1933] 1973) call to “recognize that the little girl is only a little man” (151). Alanna “look[s] enough like Thom” not just because they are

twins but also because they are children, *because* she is not yet “a girl,” because she is a “little man.”

In her critique of Freud, Irigaray ([1974] 1985) suggests that hegemonic discourse, of which Freud’s reading is a part, recognises “the little girl” as “only a little man” because her body lacks a visible marker of its sexed state.

She has nothing you can see. She exposes, exhibits the possibility of a nothing to see. Or at any rate she shows nothing that is penis-shaped or could substitute for a penis. (47)

In exhibiting nothing, there is nothing for representation. The girl-child’s body does not mean, the issue of concern in Chapter Four. Here, I am concerned with how this insistence on seeing, on specularization in Irigaray’s terms, positions the little girl as “only a little man” (Freud [1933] 1973, 151). While Thom’s “maleness” is assumedly a visible presence, Alanna’s visible difference—her “chest and everything”—has not yet appeared, so she is not yet “a girl” (Pierce 1983, 2). She is not yet a “real girl,” as *Page* (2000), a subsequent Tortall book, suggests (125). The specularization of the body elides sexed difference because it cannot be, as yet, ascertained by sight. Yet, Alanna’s being a girl is the very thing that establishes the need for this cross-dressing, whilst also making it possible.⁸³

This perceptual absence of a gendered body is not an unusual figuring in terms of childhood, as Rose ([1984] 1992) charts. Rose suggests that the child’s body is erased because childhood sexuality—“bisexual, polymorphous, perverse” (4)—threatens the stability of adult “normal” heterosexuality. Yet, it is not that the child’s fleshy, physical body does not exist—that would be another kind of impossibility—it is, rather, that this discursive production, in its binary nature, requires that the child’s body have no sexual *meaning*. Thus, while at birth children are immediately marked male or female, it is both a biological sexing of the body that lacks sex as well as one that depends on a visual apprehension of having/not having a penis. In this way, the female-child’s

⁸³ Flanagan (2008) notes “this intro frames Alanna’s decision to cross-dress as a response to her dissatisfaction with traditional femininity and desire to escape it by assuming a masculine identity as a royal page” (68).

body is, perhaps, not so much erased as her sexed body is elided, and while it is an elision that adolescence disrupts—as Alanna’s body demonstrates through becoming a “real girl”—it is also the *possibility* of becoming a “real girl” that makes Alanna’s cross-dressing possible (2000, 125). Thus, while these statuses “boy” and “girl” are precarious, it is also precisely because Alanna is a girl that she may cross-dress. If she were not, it would not be cross-dressing; it would just be wearing Thom’s clothes. It takes, in other words, both the foundation of similarity *and* this (future) difference to make Alanna’s cross-dressing possible.

This distinction between girl-child (who is both girl and not girl) and a “real girl” is not an isolated distinction within Pierce’s work (2000, 125). In Pierce’s later Protector of the Small quartet,⁸⁴ Kel—also training to become a knight, though *not* disguised as a boy—becomes this girl that Alanna will, eventually, become:

When she straightened, she was startled to see his eyes bulge. ‘Mithros’s spear, Kel!’ he [Owen] exclaimed. ‘When did you turn into a real girl?’

‘You said she was a girl already,’ muttered one of his cousins—was it Iden or Warric? Kel hadn’t gotten them straight.

‘But not a girl-girl, with a chest and all!’ protested Owen. (2000, 125–126)

Prior to the growth of this “chest,” Kel was not a “girl-girl,” as Freud’s argument suggests and as Owen’s comments make clear. Thus, there is a distinction within these texts between the girl-child, who can look like her brother, and this “real girl” or “girl-girl.”

There are two issues worth drawing out from this construction; first, this not being a girl until the “chest” develops speaks to the erasure of woman’s sexual history prior to adulthood (see, also, Rose 1984). Thus, while Alanna and Thom’s relationship as twins complicates the issue by offering the suggestion that, in some ways, Alanna merely dissolves into Thom,⁸⁵ the ambiguity of girl,

⁸⁴ In terms of “published after” *and* “set after,” according to the Tortall timeline (see Konst 2016).

⁸⁵ The brother and sister seem to dissolve into one, an issue that I return to, using Irigaray’s concern with the unity of the brother and sister, in “Who’s

its double usage (the girl-child and this Other “real girl” that she will become) suggests that it is not just this twin-ness that allows Alanna to become Thom. Rather, it has something to do with the text’s construction of being a girl-child/“little man,” and it depends quite heavily on the not yet having a “chest,” on an absence of visible of bodily difference. The second issue is a two-part questioning of popular and media culture’s representational economy that Alanna’s quartet continually navigates, often along the lines of what makes a girl. In one sense, Alanna’s body—even before the changes of puberty that would mark her as adolescent and “real girl”—threatens to break through (2000, 125). She is always already a girl.

In terms of the first, Alanna and Thom will always be twins, but they will not always be children. Thus, the prospect of Alanna’s changing body threatens their shared appearance. Yet, this threatening also occurs in the present of narration; their hair is, at once, a sameness (its colour) *and* a difference (its length): “the only difference between them—as far as most people could tell—was the length of their hair” (1983, 1). Moreover, even as children, they only appear identical when “dressed alike” (1). In this way, there is a tension between that which is constructed as essential and unchanging (hair colour, face, body shape) and that which is constructed as supplementary and thus changeable (hair length, clothing, body shape). It is poignant that “body shape” is both unchanging *and* also changeable. For the present of narration, this ambiguity of the body (its doubleness) means that bodily difference does not matter; even the possibility of more “developed” differences, do not matter—“I can hide all that” (14). In this way, it takes more than just a shared “body shape” for Alanna and Thom to swap places.

First, the clothing Alanna wears in order to cross-dress both presents her as a boy, whilst also making certain that she is, in fact, a girl. It is also the clothing that will mask her developing body, when that time comes. For this reason, the relationship between bodies and clothing is important. In *Fashioning the Frame: Boundaries and the Body*, Alexandra Warwick and Dani

Looking at Whom” when engaging issues specifically related to woman’s exclusion from the Symbolic.

Cavallaro (1998) ask, “Should dress be regarded as part of the body, or merely as an extension of, or supplement to it?” (xv). This inclusion of other things within conceptions of the body is also an issue that Balsamo (1996) engages in her concern with how technologies—and this is not just technology in the sense of devices, but it is anything interacting with a fleshy, physical body—“have subtly altered the dimensions and markers of what counts as a ‘natural’ body” (1). The entanglement of bodies with other things—digital images, as I have discussed, clothing, other bodies through, for example, pregnancy, animals, and, yes, machines—is complicated. In other words, it is often rather difficult to determine just where body ends and where clothing—or any other technology—begins, as they are entangled with one’s sense of self. Including clothing, an unnatural (as in not fleshy) thing, as part of the body not only speaks to my readings of Cinder’s cybernetic body (her body includes both human and machine in its composition), but it also suggests that, even here, there is no natural body. The body is always already conceived in relation to other things, and this conceiving in relation is integral. In Alanna’s case, clothing contributes to her being-Alan; it participates in her complicated return to a female self, and, here, it hides the differences that will come.

Interestingly, clothes come just as much into play in the revealing of Kel’s “real girl” status as they do in Alanna’s hiding of hers, a thread I also pick up in the following case study in relation to Cinder and the hiding, or not, of her cybernetic parts. Here,

Kel looked down. That summer Lalasa [Kel’s friend and handmaid] had talked her into donning lighter shirts than her palace wear. These were still cotton, but thinner, and they draped like silk. (2000, 126)

These “lighter shirts,” and especially that “they draped like silk,” reveal the body underneath. They reveal Kel’s “chest and all.” Kel, Alanna too, is always already a girl. As she later speculates, “maybe I’m the same whatever I wear, she thought. It’s just easier to fight in breeches” (2001, 261). On one hand, clothing does not affect Kel’s being a girl, “I’m the same whatever I wear,” but on the other, “a pale pink shift, pink wool stockings, and a fine wool gown” construct her as “the girl she would have been had she not tried for her shield” (261).

Pierce's Tortall universe offers a complex positioning on what it means to be a girl, one that problematises the conflation of sex and gender as the two are not always mutually exclusive *or* mutually dependent (Butler 1990).

With Alanna, the suggestion of cross-dressing brings future sexed, and sexual, difference into awareness. Their father's edict that his children will be sent off to train initiates Alanna's becoming "a lady," a position also coded as feminine and one involving bodily comportment. To "walk slowly," "sit still," and to keep her "shoulders back," is the gendered performance required to be "be a lady" (1). Because there is nothing to see—Alanna is not yet this "real girl" (2000, 125)—the comportment of the body, holding and presenting the body in ways that appear "lady"-like, is what constructs it as feminine, that is to say woman. This narration of femininity—of being a girl, when one is also a child—thus depends upon presenting the body as feminine, despite an absence of visual markers of the body's femaleness. Of this comportment and its relationship to femininity, Young (1980) offers:

I take 'femininity' to designate not a mysterious quality or essence that all women have by virtue of their being biologically female. It is, rather, a set of structures and conditions that delimit the typical *situation* of being a woman in a particular society, as well as the typical way in which this situation is lived by the women themselves. (144)

This perfectly describes Alanna's situation: as a child, she does not have "a mysterious quality or essence." In fact, despite being "biologically female," she is—until the changes of puberty—identical to her brother. She is not "a real girl" (2000, 125). Thus, it takes her comportment in order to effect femininity on her body. In her specific situation, "walking slowly," "sitting still" and keeping her "shoulders back" construe her as a woman, as "be[ing] a lady" (1983, 1). Taking issue with the adage "throwing like a girl," Young suggests it is not that girls throw in a feminine way because they are girls; it is, rather, that throwing *like* a girl makes them feminine, a culturally learned behaviour makes them feminine. For Alanna, the learned bodily comportment of being a "lady" would construe her as (also) a girl (that is feminine)—although, "be a lady," is far more complicated than this allows.

In this pseudo-medieval world, “lady” is also a station of rank, a classed position. It is not, merely, being-woman, and it can include activities that are not ladylike—“my aunt lit barrels of lard and had them catapulted onto Scanran ships this summer”—but that are appropriate to the rank—“as would any delicately reared noblewoman” (Pierce [1999] 2004, 29). In this way, the text calls into question the expectations associated with a gendered performance, first by expanding what “be a lady” means—it is both a marker of femininity and a social position—and second by refiguring terms like “delicate.” Moreover, and this is why I do not call for a strictly performance-based constructing of gender, this reading does not include the visible bodily markers (“chest and everything”) that transform Kel and Alanna into “real girl[s].” The performance of gender—and even our interpretation of what that performance means—can change through, for example, cross-dressing. Simultaneously, the body itself both can change (it becomes that which signifies “a girl”) and it cannot change (it does not become physically male) through cross-dressing. Alanna’s body remains, or still becomes, female despite what she does with it: walking slowly, “sitting still” or “falling down and whacking things,” the things Thom suggests are part of becoming a knight, do not matter to this being a “real girl.” Directly contesting contemporary, hegemonic conceptions of femininity on the body, this is about how perceptions of her body change, an issue that I explore in the following case study.

Finally, as children and twins, Alanna and Thom appear identical, apart from those particularly superficial differences of hair length and clothing. Yet, these identical twins are also different: Alanna’s inner qualities, or traits, align more with those coded as masculine within this world and Thom’s with the feminine.⁸⁶ In other words, the bodily difference that is always already present, as well as the visible difference that is yet to come, are not the only differences that the text constructs between Alanna and Thom. Alanna is also constructed as both better at, and as liking more, the skills associated with boys and men within this world, a construction of masculinity that mimetically appeals to

⁸⁶ Alanna’s particular strength at healing, which is typically aligned with the feminine is excluded.

hegemonic masculinity. As Coram, once he has been included within the deception, muses:

Alanna was much quicker than her brother. She rarely tired, even hiking over rough country. She had a feel for the fighting arts, and that was something that could never be learned. She was also as stubborn as a mule. (1983, 15)

Alanna has what it takes—quickness, stamina, a feel for the fighting arts, and stubbornness—in order to become a knight and a boy. Crucially, Alanna possesses the skills required to become a knight—coded as masculine by both the text and the hero paradigm, which this quartet follows—and her brother does not. Victoria Flanagan (2008) suggests that this is typical of cross-dressing in children’s literature as the absence of strong male and masculine characters allows the girl to carve her “own gender niche” (104). As examples, Flanagan cites Thom’s inability to fight as well as the frailty of Mulan’s father in Walt Disney’s *Mulan* (Bancroft 1998).⁸⁷

The male characters within these narratives rarely fulfill the conventional expectations of masculinity, and it is in the context of these failed personifications of traditional masculinity that the cross-dressing protagonist is able to carve her/his own gender niche, which falls outside the socially condoned categorizations of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity.’ (104)

This notion that Alanna carves her “own gender niche” is integral both here and to the overall argument of this thesis: through cross-dressing, shape-shifting, bleeding and being cyborg, these mythopoeic YA fantasy texts offer alternative frameworks of living and being a body. Moreover, Chapter Four specifically reads how Alanna constructs her own “gender niche” through a hero’s journey that takes the body, particularly the bleeding of menstruation, into account. Here, Flanagan’s position fails to take into account that it is precisely because Alanna is a girl that she must possess these skills, as they not only contribute to her cross-dressed persona, but they also contribute to how the text constructs

⁸⁷ In the film, Mulan cross-dresses in order to stand in for her ageing and injured father, when the Emperor has conscription notices issued in order to fight the invading Huns.

Alanna and Thom as merely one self in two bodies,⁸⁸ a positing that is key as it not only questions the gendered body's relationship to the sexed self and gendered identity (see, also, Butler 1990), but it positions Alanna's "gender niche" as existing on a continuum of potential between hegemonic femininity and hegemonic masculinity. In this way, it is not so much "outside the socially condoned categorizations" as it is between them.

This coding of Alanna's skills and attributes as masculine—through their specific manifestation in terms of "quick[ness]," endurance, and a "feel for the fighting arts"—also begins establishing that this is (15), or will be, a hero narrative. As I demonstrated in Chapter Two, the hero is bodily stability. He is bodily stability because he tests his body against foes, and it does not fail. Thus, masculinity (coded as strength, stamina, and an ability to fight) is part of the heroic makeup. In other words, by the time Alanna is a full and "bloodied" knight, she is also "a hero. She's proved it over and over" ([1999] 2004, 165). The hero and heroic deeds—deeds that are achieved because of physical prowess—are one and the same, and it is a point evidenced in *The Woman Who Rides Like a Man* (1984), when both Alanna and Jonathan undergo, at different times, "the trial by combat" in order to become members of the Bloody Hawk (24).

The Bloody Hawk are a Bazhir tribe comprised of a primarily nomadic people who live within Tortall's Great Southern Desert and who are known for their combat skills. At the time of Jonathan's trial, Myles stops Alanna from interfering in order to protect Jonathan, suggesting, "'He [Jonathan] was a full knight during the war with Tusaine—he's no unblooded boy!'" (138). It is interesting on two fronts, as it develops my reading of "being hero" through physical prowess, while also suggesting that Alanna is more confident in her abilities than she is in Jonathan's, the man who—as male, knight and king-to-be—ought to be the hero. Through her actions, Alanna has become heroic, and it is a heroic that is made possible by, and through, a body that is not traditionally heroic. In this way, the text offers a notion of "being" that is not

⁸⁸ Hunt (1986) suggests that this figuring of twins, as one person split into bodies, is typical in books for children.

contingent on the sexed body, though, at the same time, that sexed body is a part of the “being.” In other words, Alanna is much quicker than her brother and possesses a “feel for the fighting arts” (1983, 15) that he does not, and the sex of her body matters little in this figuring; yet, at the same time, the sex of her body is crucial because it is hers; she is a girl.

Finally, as children and twins, Alanna and Thom appear identical, apart from those particularly superficial differences of hair length and clothing. Yet, these identical twins are also different: Alanna’s inner qualities, or traits, align more with those coded as masculine within this world, and Thom’s with the feminine (Alanna’s healing magic excluded). Thus, Alanna appears to be merely a little boy. She appears to be her brother, or, perhaps, it is as if the two twins comprise the whole of a single person, a reading that Thom’s death—at the end of the final book and concomitant to Alanna’s incorporation of both feminine and masculine aspects of herself—suggests. Here, it is about how a reading of their similarity is dependent upon a difference between surface and depth, between that which can change (length of hair, clothes, body shape) and that which cannot (hair colour, face, body shape). It is a distinction that is continually made—and troubled—throughout Pierce’s Tortall universe.

Alanna and Thom’s shared appearance is also, at least in part, concerned with the mutability of both gender and appearance, as both qualities are read on the body. Alanna’s cross-dressing, in particular, depends on a notion that the body can be hidden and disguised, an act that alters perceptions of it. This mutability of appearance is a topic that the Lunar glamour, “the illusion of themselves that they project into the minds of others,” explores in greater detail (Meyer 2012, 172), whilst also speaking to issues of appearance—digitally edited photographs and cosmetic surgery—of popular and media culture.

Hiding the Body’s “Truth:” The Lunar Glamour

The apparent, that is to say visible, differences between humans and Lunars are minimal, save the Lunar’s ability to construct a “glamour,” a magical method of appearance improvement: “beautiful” is often the aim (Meyer 2012, 172). In other words—excluding this glamour, a sort of continuous makeover with

endless possibilities—Lunars are “human” in appearance. Thus, this section explores how the glamour—“the illusion of themselves that they [Lunars] project into the minds of others” (172)—questions the reliability of appearance, whilst also erasing the very materiality, a kind of “truth,” of the body in favour of this “illusion” of glamour. This hiding, or obscuring, the body is also picked up in a narration of Cinder’s preoccupation with hiding her cybernetic parts, a hiding that speaks to Alanna’s hiding of her female body through cross-dressing. Finally, while the glamour is a “project[ion]”—not an actual, as in physical, change to the Lunar’s appearance—the narration also offers an illustration of how even perceptual changes (the Lunar glamour) are not as superficial as they might appear, while also speaking to the effects of images on adolescent girls.

While most Lunars have the ability to construct a glamour (those known as “shells” are the exclusion), (Queen) Levana’s is both the most powerful and the most pervasively discussed within *The Lunar Chronicles*. Known as the “endless lie,” Levana’s glamour not only masks a body that is thoroughly “disfigured” (2015,692), but the glamour becomes “so real that she [Levana] had no use of her true skin anymore” (2015b, 96). Crucially, the glamour does not change the physical body. Rather, this is a magical means of changing perceptions of the body. In the case of Levana,

Beneath the glamour, her face was disfigured from ridges and scars, sealing shut her left eye. The destroyed skin continued down her jaw and neck, disappearing beneath the collar of her dress. Her hair was thinner and a lighter shade of brown, and great chunks were missing where the scars had reached around to the back of her head. More scars could be seen on her left arm where her silk sleeve didn’t hide them. (2015c, 692)

These “ridges” and “scars” are Levana’s “true skin,” and it is their truth that the glamour conceals, not only from others but also from Levana herself: “after so many years of wrapping herself in the glamour, it was nearly impossible to let it go” (2015b, 191). Just as Alanna’s cross-dressing does not change the “truth” of her skin—she is, or will be, a “real girl” (Pierce 2000, 125)—the glamour does not change Levana’s body, although it does affect perceptions of it. Moreover, while I suggested in Chapter Two that scars are important for mapping the

contours of the body, this narration—through Levana’s perception of her scars—demonstrates the view of scars taken by hegemonic culture, that is, scars should be hidden. Finally, this use of “truth” in relation to the “true skin” is not to posit the fleshy body as more “true” or “real” than the glamour. The glamour is its own kind of truth, the “truth” of the way Levana wishes to be seen. Thus, this notion of “true skin” is an appeal to the physical, materiality of the body that is posited as a kind of truth.

Poignantly, Levana relies so heavily on her glamour, instead of taking advantage of surgery that would materially improve her body (as opposed to the transience of the glamour), because with surgery “there would always be scars no matter how faint” (2015b, 206). This is the power of the glamour and of the selfie. There are no scars with either of these mechanisms, yet they still transform the body. The “makeovers” they afford represent ideal bodily improvement, a better body without evidence (scars) of the body that came before. The transformations wrought through the glamour and selfie also speak to the ephemeral quality of a “perfect” appearance. Ideals do not last, so new changes, new makeovers, need always be enacted. The temporary nature of the glamour and the selfie allow—because they are illusions of (temporary) perfection—for this perpetual making over, reinforcing Wolf’s (1991) definition of “beauty work” (15).

The Lunar glamour, and the same holds true for Alanna’s cross-dressing, also questions the connection between gender and the body. More specifically, the Lunar glamour questions the contemporary Western assumption that femininity depends on a body that appears feminine. After encountering two Lunar “ladies” (Meyer 2015c, 591), the following exchange occurs between Thorne and Cress, who, as a “shell” (not gifted within this world), is not affected by the Lunar’s “ability to manipulate bioelectricity” (2012, 171).

Thorne let out a low whistle. “Holy spades. The women in this place.”

Cress bristled. “You mean the *glamours* in this place. One of them was a man.”

Stumbling, Thorne looked down at her. “You don’t say. Which one?” (2015c, 591, emphasis original)

Just as the glamour disguised the “truth”—the “ridges” and “scars”—of Levana’s skin (2015c, 692), it also disguises the sex of this Lunar man, to such an extent that Throne thoroughly (“You don’t say”) perceives both Lunars to be not just women but attractive, “holy spades,” women.

This twofold construction of glamour—that it is a magical ability *and* an ability that is concerned with beauty—speaks to glamour as it is conceived in Western consensus reality. In fact, the Lunar glamour unites the original and contemporary uses of the word, an issue at stake for Rachel Moseley (2002). Moseley suggests, “in the history of the usage of the word [glamour], the primary meaning—‘magic, enchantment, spell’—has been displaced by the idea of surface or physical feminine allure” (404).⁸⁹ This is the Lunar glamour, or, should I say, the Lunar glamour is both “magic, enchantment, spell” and a creating of “allure.” Interestingly, while both male and female Lunars construct glammers, the descriptions of Lunar appearance often tends toward the feminine: “He [Jael] was willowy and lean, with wavy dark hair and near-black eyes that burned in the candlelight” (Meyer 2013, 278). Within this world, a gendered appearance is mutable. In the quest for pretty or beauty, the glamour aligns women *and* men with the feminine, as “one of them was a man” indicated above (2015c, 591). Here, the attributes “willowy” and “wavy dark hair” speak to conventional markers of femininity, and while it is unclear if this is Jael’s glamourised appearance or his “natural” one, it does describe the kind of appearance preferred by Lunars.

The central aim of Moseley’s article is to unite glamour’s two definitions—magic and appearance—in order to trace, through the figure of the “teen witch” (403), shifting discourses of feminism. Moseley states,

in reinstating the primary meaning of the word, a profound but contradictory link is posited between femininity and magic in which femininity is produced as superficial and deceptive charm, mysterious and unknowable essence, *and* as power. (2002, 404, emphasis original)

Within *The Lunar Chronicles*, this “link” is manifest in the figure of the glamour-wielding Lunar, with, as I discussed above significant implications for

⁸⁹ For a social history of glamour in the West, see Dyhouse (2010).

femininity. The Lunar glamour is power, and it is power that often produces Cochrane's (2014) "heightened fantasy femininity." The glamour offers femininity as illusion, as powerful and persuasive but as illusion. With the glamour not only is there no depth—femininity is only performance—but there is also a profound rift between the glamour and the body's materiality, what the text posits as a kind of "truth," and what I refer to as materiality.

Within *The Lunar Chronicles*, the glamour is not the only means by which the body is superficially altered, as clothing also plays a pivotal role. Within the first three texts, narration presents Cinder as preoccupied with hiding her cybernetic parts.

She covered her steel hand first, and though her right palm began to sweat immediately inside the thick material, she felt more comfortable with the gloves on, hiding the plating of her left hand. (2012, 5)

While the narration is telling in itself, these "thick" gloves, one of which is "hiding the plating of her left hand," are in direct contrast with the "silk gloves" Cinder later wears in order to attend the ball (2012, 324). Where those "felt too fine, too delicate, too flimsy" (324), the "thick" gloves cause Cinder's "right palm" to "sweat" (5). In this way, while the hiding—or revealing—of Cinder's cybernetic parts is obviously at stake in relation to these pairs of gloves, the gloves also speak to what it means to be (human) female within this world.

The "silk gloves," gifted to Cinder by Prince Kai and ostensibly *for* her to wear at the ball (2012, 324), mark (human) femininity within this world. Not only are the gloves "pure silk and shining sliver-white" as well as "the finest pair" Cinder "could have imagined," they are also "fit for a princess" (299), a certain kind of heteronormative femininity as I discussed in relation to Disney's *Cinderella*. The silk gloves also speak to the "real girl" that Kel became through the development of breasts (2000, 125), a becoming that was made evident because of the "lighter shirts," that while "still cotton [...] draped like silk (126), revealing her "chest and all" (126). In draping "like silk," the "lighter shirts" expose Kel's bodily femininity (its femaleness); the "palace wear" (her training clothes) obscured it. The silk gloves mark femininity; the "thick" gloves hide "plate metal."

The “plate metal” is integral. Not only is it that which is not feminine, but it is also that which is not human.

Then the prince reached for her hand—her cyborg hand. Cinder tensed, terrified that he would feel the hard metal, even through the gloves [...]. She mentally urged the robotic limb to go soft, to be pliant, to be *human*. (163)

In other words, because she wears thick gloves, Cinder is not only *not* feminine—at least, not the heteronormative feminine marked by the silk gloves—she is also not entirely human. Thus, while there are two kinds of hiding occurring here—the covering with a glove and the mental urging of softness, pliability and humanness, both speak to a preoccupation with keeping the cybernetic body, a body that is not only machine but also not feminine, hidden, with not letting it reveal itself.⁹⁰ In this way, the narration also situates itself within the discourses of popular and media culture. Cinder could be any adolescent girl hiding braces, a prosthesis, or any other “thing” deemed inappropriate to the appropriate—thin, fit, whole—appearance.

Yet, this is mythopoeic YA fantasy, and as such, while the text may demonstrate the position of popular and media culture—that things, spots, braces, scars not meeting the ideals of appearance must be hidden—it also offers alternatives; it “progresses” to new positions.

Cinder peeled off her work gloves and shoved them into her back pocket. There was still a tinge of panic at the action—her brain reminding her, out of habit, that she wasn’t supposed to remove the gloves in front of anyone, especially Kai—but she ignored it. Kai didn’t blink at the unveiling of her cyborg hand, like he didn’t even notice it anymore. (2015c, 92)

⁹⁰ The text makes it clear that Cinder’s cybernetic reconstruction has rendered her not feminine.

If Cinder’s body had ever been predisposed to femininity, it had been ruined by whatever the surgeons had done to her, leaving her with a stick-straight figure. Too angular. Too boyish. Too awkward with her heavy artificial leg. (2012, 34)

This self-reflexive engagement with Cinder's preoccupation ("out of habit") with hiding the cybernetic parts allows the text to comment on its initial alignment. In so doing, it also offers a comment on that earlier preoccupation.

She knew she was thinking about it less and less. Sometimes she was even surprised upon seeing a flash of metal in the corner of her eye when she went to pick something up. It was strange. She'd always been aware of it before, mortified that someone might see. (92)

While problematically still giving weight to Kai's not "notic[ing]" her hand anymore, the narration makes it clear that not being "mortified" upon the "unveiling of her cyborg hand" is an accomplishment of Cinder's—"she knew *she* was thinking about it less and less" (my emphasis). Interestingly, within the transition, the gloves become not that which hides her body but, instead, her "work gloves;" they are given a purpose. They are useful to her work as a mechanic. This shift in perspective is integral for it models exactly the kinds of shifts in perspective girls could make outside of the texts if exposed to images, like these, within the texts. This cannot be over-emphasised: these sorts of narrations—the self reflexive engagements with issues of popular and media culture that show alternatives—are crucial for demonstrating, for modelling, how such shifts in perspective can, and do, occur.

This importance is reiterated by how frequently the text demonstrates this change in perspective. Here,

Putting them [heavy gloves] on had dredged up a number of memories. There had been a time when she wore gloves everywhere, when she'd been so ashamed of being cyborg she refused to let her prostheses show. She couldn't recall when that had changed, but now the glove felt like a lie. (2015, 167)

Speaking to issues of disability and difference, Cinder is no longer "ashamed" not just of "being cyborg" but also of "let[ting] her prostheses show." The prostheses are a part of her body's "truth;" they have become included within Cinder's body image (her sense of self), and in so being, they create a new "true skin" (2015b, 96). They demonstrate how "truth" changes; it is not stagnate. Thus, the transition to the "glove [feeling] like a lie" is crucial to this modelling of how difference can be made acceptable and normal through these narrations.

These readings—of the Lunar glamour, Cinder’s preoccupation with hiding her cybernetic parts as well as Alanna’s cross-dressing—have been concerned with superficial changes to the body, that is to say, with changes that occur at the level of the body’s surface in order to effect perceptions of the body, as is also the case with the selfie. Alanna appears as Thom, a disfigured Lunar appears able-bodied, a Lunar man appears as a woman, and all gifted Lunars appear, when using their glamour, more “beautiful” (2012, 172 and 2015c, 592). These changes do not physically alter the body, excluding Alanna’s haircut in the previous section. Yet, how superficial are “superficial” changes, especially when the illusion is so pervasive that it is all that is seen and thus known?

Levana’s glamour, as the “endless lie” (2012, 351), offers a particularly useful point of focus for illustrating how superficial changes—changes that alter others’ perception of the body but not the body itself—might not be as superficial as they seem; it is also advantageous, however, to hold in mind both Cinder’s hiding her cybernetic parts and Alanna’s cross-dressing, as they too are superficial changes in perspective that do not physically alter the body. In terms of Levana, the text makes it quite clear that her glamour, one that she has held in place for years, is reality: “by now, so many had forgotten what she truly looked like,” and “her glamour was the reality now, no matter what Evret thought, no matter what anyone thought (2015b, 206). While there is clearly a tension here—perhaps, a desire on Levana’s part for the glamour to be “real,” and not just the “reality now”—its pervasiveness is clear. The glamour’s hold is strong: “after so many years of wrapping herself in the glamour, it was nearly impossible to let it go. Her brain struggled to release her grip on the manipulation” (2015c, 191). While this shows another way in which the texts refuse to posit definitively the “truth” of the body (physical shape or glamour), this reading of the glamour also and more importantly crystallises the insidious nature of the selfie: it, glamour or selfie, may just be an illusion, but it is a powerful one, not least owing to its pervasiveness. After all, how many girls have stood before mirrors unable to “see” anything other than the “flaws” dictated by popular and media cultures pervasive images of perfection?

Finally, the glamour illustrates an unreliability of appearance if only because it erases difference whilst also expressing bodily unrealities, as Scarlet

(a refiguring of Little Red Riding in The Lunar Chronicles) is narrated as musing.

Stupid Lunars and their stupid glammers. Anyone could be an enemy. Anyone she passed could be a thaumaturge or one of those lousy aristocrats or the queen herself, and Scarlet wouldn't be able to tell the difference. (2015c, 541)

It is not just that anyone could be "enemy," "thaumaturge," "aristocrat," or "the queen." It is that, given the glamour, anyone could be anyone. Appearance is not enough to determine *who* someone really *is*. The Lunar glamour aside, there is a distancing implicit in appearance; there is a space between the viewer and the viewed, and in this space, misapprehension can occur. The dissonance between self and appearance that always already exists is simply heightened through this glamour.

Moreover, this Lunar glamour also foreshadows an instability of appearance that goes much deeper than merely disguising the body's surface, a point that the impact of continued exposure to the glamour initiated and that one final narration of glamour develops:

She [Levana] thought of Solstice's stomach, plump and round with the promise of a child.

[...]

Levana settled a hand on her own stomach, incorporating the pregnancy into the glamour. What must that feel like, to have a living creature growing inside her? (34)

This is the illusion of pregnancy. Levana, through the Lunar glamour, takes on the appearance of being pregnant. In so doing, the narration invites questions around bodily multiplicity: not only does the glamour link Levana to Solstice (the wife of the man Levana loves), but it also links them both to pregnancy, a heightened situation of bodily multiplicity (and one that occurs not just in fantasy texts). This move also takes my reading from the body's surface to a consideration of the internal, in that pregnancy is an internal multiplicity made visible on the body's surface. In other words, where the first case study was concerned with how two bodies effectively represented one self, thus

complicating the representational economy as self must be singular, and this section focused on Lunar glamour and Cinder's hiding of her cybernetic parts, thus complicating the one-to-one relationship implicit in the economy, the following section is concerned with how through pregnancy the body becomes more than one (see, also, Battersby 1998). More specifically, it is concerned with how this multiplicity plays out on the body's surface, as the body's surface—or its appearance—is the very marker of self under question throughout all these changes.

The Pregnant Body: Revealing, and Concealing, Multiplicity

Battersby (1998) follows her description of woman as a phenomenon with the call to stop "treating women as somehow exceptional" (2), and in order to do so, Battersby

start[s] from the question of what would have to change were we to take seriously the notion that a 'person' could normally, at least always potentially, become two. (2)

Battersby is concerned with pregnancy, with the embodied state of being more than one, and while this has implications for subjectivity that I return to in the Conclusions, I here use narrations of pregnancy in order to question the assumption of a singular appearance representing a singular self, in a straightforward and uncomplicated one-to-one fashion.

Admittedly, narrations of pregnancy initially seem at odds amidst my concern with how YAL narrates the liminal transition between childhood and adulthood—narrations of menarche would be more expected. However, the pregnant body and the adolescent body share a heightened association with being embodied and pregnancy is a "natural" progression of the adolescent female bodily processes, menarche, with which I am, and these texts are, predominantly concerned. For example, Alanna and Kel's quartets specifically include narrations of menarche, as I discuss in the following chapter, and while Daine and Cinder's narratives are not concerned with menarche in the same way, Daine's mother was the village midwife, a point the text uses to acquaint

Daine with female bodily processes, pregnancy and childbirth, and in *Cinder*, it is made clear that, despite her cybernetic parts, Cinder's reproductive system "is almost untouched" (2012, 116), suggesting "normal" female bodily processes still occur.⁹¹ In short, while about adolescent girls, these texts are concerned with being female and thus the potential for being pregnant—the potential for one body to become more than one, as Battersby (1998) suggests—is part of that concern.

While interesting because it is the narration of Alanna's daughter's pregnancy thus offering a kind of repetition, the narration of Aly's pregnancy in *Trickster's Queen* starts this reading of pregnant embodiment the most simply, or so it appears.

Aly, whose morning sickness extended sometimes to evenings, had contented herself with a mild broth and fruit juices. She looked frequently at the slight swell of her belly, mystified by the thought that another human being was taking shape beneath her navel. ([2004] 2005, 441)

As the "morning sickness," "slight swell to her belly," not to mention the "human being [...] taking shape beneath her navel" suggests, Aly is pregnant, but these markers of pregnancies are not alike. There is a key difference between the markers "morning sickness" and "slight swell"—one is a visible, physical change to the body and the other is not. This visibility/invisibility split speaks the conundrum of pregnancy: with pregnancy, there is a tension between the internal, where change is taking place, and the external, where some—and only some—evidence of that change is made available. Moreover, pregnancy offers the possibility of two, or more, bodies within one body. In this way, narrations of pregnancy have the potential to be narrations of bodily change that question the representational economy dominating popular and media culture, and they do so by complicating the one-to-one relationship between self and appearance as well as the assumed singularity of self/body.

⁹¹ On the 15th of January 2015, Meyer (@marissa_meyer) responded to a question I posed on Twitter asking if Cinder has periods: "@Le_phill Yep. But they hardly seem to slow her down!" (Meyer 2015b).

In a sense, this is similar to Alanna/Thom's complicating of representational economies; although, where that reading complicated this economy by splitting one self into two bodies, narrations of pregnancy show two (or more) bodies within one body. It also further complicates representational economies through a two-part ambiguity regarding what the pregnant body represents and how it does so. First, the bump allows misreading. Through sight alone—especially in the early stages of pregnancy—it is difficult (if not impossible) to ascertain if a woman is pregnant, or not. Second, the body, even if it “clearly” announces pregnancy, masks that which it reveals as, until birth, the detail of what is within is not available—unless medical imaging devices are employed, although in contemporary Western culture even those only reveal—or create—so much. In this way, pregnancy also exudes an air of the magical, linking this mundane (as in occurring with consensus reality) bodily transformation to magical shape-shifting.

At the start of her series, Aly is captured (while sailing from her home to Port Legann, a nearby fief) by a “clutch of pirate ships” raiding the Tortallan coastline ([2003] 2005, 23). Sold into slavery in the neighbouring Copper Isles, Aly meets, marries, and “mate[s]” Nawat Crow, a “crow-turned” man ([2004] 2005, 342).⁹² According to the mythology of this world, all crows have the ability to become human, temporarily or permanently, at their discretion: “in the Copper Isles, a tale is told of crow who fell in love with a mortal woman and changed to human shape, as all crows can change, for her” (2011b, 75). Sacred to the trickster god Kyprioth (as explanation for their antics), shape-shifting is a part a crow's arsenal of “tricks” (see, for example [2003] 2005, 135). In the *Daughter of the Lioness* duology, the crows temporarily take on human form in order to aid the raka (indigenous peoples of the Copper Isles) as they overthrow their luarin conquerors. Moreover, the raka and the crows see themselves as “cousins” ([2003] 2005, 287), so while Nawat contributes to this complicating of self-through-appearance in that he is crow turned man who, once man, “can be a crow at need” ([2004] 2005, 344), his unique existence also makes Aly's pregnancy interesting.

⁹² This is the setting of the raka magic that I discussed in Chapter Two.

Throughout her entire pregnancy, Aly is concerned that—rather than giving birth to a mortal, human baby—she will deliver eggs, owing to her husband’s heritage, a worry Nawat cannot comprehend.

Since humans came inconveniently arrayed with arms, legs, and a head, all of which might get stuck as they left their labouring mother, Nawat thought any woman would be glad to birth a nice, well-shaped egg. Aly had never come to see his point of view. (2011b, 76)

While a human woman giving birth to eggs is highly improbable within Western consensus reality, the fantasy nature of these tales means that it is possible, even if still unlikely. However, whether or not Aly gives birth to eggs is really not the point, the point is: while it is known that Aly is pregnant—those markers I discussed indicate as much—the pregnancy does not reveal exactly what is “taking shape beneath her navel” ([2004] 2005, 441). In the case of this pregnancy—set within a Secondary World whose logic and rational differs from Western consensus reality—Aly may very well give birth to eggs and not a human child.

The pregnant body, both this one within the text as well as ones outside the text, reveals—and conceals—its multiplicity. The representational economy of self equalling appearance that dominates Western culture is problematic. On one level, the reliance on sight means that—without the ability to breach the barrier that is one’s skin—until the baby is born, her shape is unknown. Thus, while Aly does not, in fact, give birth to eggs, she does, still surprisingly, give birth to triplets: “‘Here’s what’s been causing the trouble!’ Mistress Penolong [the midwife] said with pleasure’ [...] She lifted up a small wriggling body [...] ‘You have another daughter’” (2011b, 84–85). It has been “trouble” because they, Aly and the midwife, did not know how many babies Aly would have; in the end, a daughter (Ochobai) and a son (Junim) preceded this final baby girl (Ulasu).

While Aly’s pregnancy makes available a certain blurring of the single, stable body, it is a limited blurring, as is the case for all pregnancies. Unless medical technology is employed to see within, the body does not reveal its depth, a topic of this chapter’s conclusion. Here, the limited visibility of the internal illustrates how the body’s surface is not enough for determining self:

Aly's self, while pregnant, has in fact, been comprised of three additional bodies/selves, more than even the "normal" expectations of pregnancy predicted. Pregnancy makes explicit the body's liminality. It is a threshold both revealing and concealing the depth within, yet the narrations of pregnancy within these fantasy texts can make the internal more available on the body's surface, as Daine's pregnancy makes explicit, especially in that she must shape-shift below the waist every time her unborn child does.

In interviews, Pierce makes it clear that Daine had an "anti-fertility charm" prior to her pregnancy,⁹³ only that she lost it "in all the shape-changes she made during *Lady Knight*" (Len 2007a).⁹⁴ This loosing of her, effectively, birth control is given as the reason as to why, when Daine was twenty-four and "more than three months along" before "she even realized she was pregnant," according to a discussion on *SheroesCentral* (Len 2007b).⁹⁵ Pierce goes on to say, that Daine

doesn't remember where or when she lost it. She only realized something was a little off in September, when she couldn't lace up her

⁹³ Narratives of birth control—of the girls actively choosing to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies—are central to Pierce's world. In *Squire* (2001), Kel seeks out a "midwife-healer" in order to purchase a charm against pregnancy, "as declaration that she could decide some things for herself" (301). In one respect, this is another means of demonstrating positive embodiment, in that choosing this "[...] thing for herself"—choosing not get pregnant, whilst still having sex—is an act of agency. Alanna also wears an anti-fertility charm, the magical method of birth control within this world. For example,

'I'll give you [Alanna] a charm against your getting pregnant, then. If you change your mind you can throw it away.'

'Pigs might fly,' the girl muttered. (1983, 138)

The narrations around pregnancy and birth control within Pierce's Tortall universe consistently give the adolescent girl choice over her body.

⁹⁴ Tortall is at war with the neighbouring country Scanra during *Lady Knight* (2002). Given her unique set of abilities, Daine is among the first line of defence. Needless to say, she was rather busy.

⁹⁵ Sadly, the original discussion has been archived. However, Pierce's comments have been collected by "Len" on *Words of Tamora Pierce*, which is the source I reference.

breeches. She went to a healer, who gave her the news that she was pregnant. Numair was over the moon. (Len 2007a, n.p)

There are several things going on in this passage: issues of how pregnancy is known, which Aly's narration began exploring and that will also be picked up in Chapter Four, as well as a securing of the joy for this pregnancy, a joy for the child it will bear—Numair (father and Daine's partner) is "over the moon." While this last has little to do with the bodily instability with which I am concerned, it does speak to the wider issue of making available narrations of difference within these texts; in that, this background provides a story, a narrative of not just acceptance but happiness, both of which are often lacking in realistic YAL featuring stories of pregnant teenage girls.⁹⁶

While not a part of any specific quartet, these interviews are integral to the development of, generally, this Secondary World and, specifically, Daine's pregnancy. In this case, these paratextual materials not only situate Daine's pregnancy, but they also explain *why* Daine has to shape-shift below the waist every time her unborn child does: "she changed shape so many times in her first three months that the baby got used to it, and has continued to shape-shift ever since" (Len 2007a). This makes explicit a relationship between mother and child that is crucial; the pregnant woman is not one self in one body, and the relationship forged here extends beyond pregnancy and into motherhood.

For now, this paratextual material fills a blank space within the narration, and in doing so, it establishes the *why* of this narration in *Trickster's Choice*:

'Your aunt is having a baby shape-shifter within the month,' replied her mother. [...] 'If she doesn't change below the waist whenever the child does, it might kick its way out of her womb.' Alanna shuddered. ' [...] it made me queasy to see her go from bear to donkey to fish every now and then, while her upper half remains the same.' ([2003] 2005, 17)

⁹⁶ Examples of realistic YAL concerning pregnancy include, but are not limited too, Efaw (2009), Nolan (2011), and Carter (2013). Overwhelmingly, these books—and those of a similar vein—see the pregnant girl as wayward, as fallen. *Trouble* by Non Pratt (2014) stands out as a realistic YAL text that concerns teen pregnancy without the didacticism bound up in the above texts. Finally Emgee (2006) offers a critical look at pregnancy in realistic YAL.

Daine's having to shape-shift each time her unborn child does establishes a tension between the outside appearance (where shape-shifting is available) and the inside womb (where the unborn child is shape-shifting). While pregnancies typically require some sort of "shape-change"—as Aly's "slight swell" indicated ([2004] 2005, 441)—Daine's shape-shifting to match the baby takes that change to an entirely different level: it makes explicit the shape(s) of the child; Daine's form shifts to *match* the unborn child. It is about "accomodat[ing] the baby's changes (infant to horse to rabbit to bird to fawn to cub to [...] you name it)," as Pierces states (Len 2007a). In this way, the narration of Daine's pregnancy makes explicit not only a connection between mother and child but also Battersby's (1998) argument that the mother is no longer one—the mother is two (or more).

Finally, the appearance of Daine's child—that is to say, the child's self—is not fixed, the continual shape-shifting indicates as much. Moreover, Daine, and readers, do not know what, or who, this child is:

No one could even magically tell the child's sex while it was in the womb. It had shifted both sex and shape constantly, pummeling poor Daine with everything from elephant feet to ostrich claws. ([2003] 2005, 130)

Before the child is born, the child's self, identity, and shape are not fixed. Moreover, they are directly tied to the mother's: the child is part of the mother and the mother part of the child, again expanding a sense of self, as where does one begin and the other end? While this is the case for any pregnancy—the relationship between mother and child is one of interdependency and relation, as opposed to opposition—this fantastical pregnancy has the ability to demonstrate that relationship in ways that are impossible to mundane pregnancies (that is 'normal' or non-fantastical pregnancies). In this way, where woman confuses boundaries—specifically, the boundary of self/other underpinning Western philosophy, as Battersby (1998) argues (see, also, Irigaray [1974] 1985)—the pregnant woman makes this confusion explicit and the pregnancies in these fantasy texts offer a further, heightened example of that confusion.

Pregnancy has the capacity to both make internal change known on the body's surface, while, at the same time, masking the detail of that change, in part because, as the above suggests, that detail is unfixed, still forming. In this way, pregnancy—even “normal,” as in occurring within Western consensus reality, pregnancy—questions representational economies by complicating the assumed singularity of self. Both revealing and concealing the multiplicity within, the pregnant body is a liminal body, one that also troubles—as the liminal does—the stability of the categories (self and other) that it interrupts. In fact, Genep ([1909] 1960) devotes just as much attention to “Pregnancy and Childbirth” (41–49) as he does to adolescence. Regarding pregnancy, he states,

it has been established that at the onset of pregnancy a woman is placed in a state of isolation, either because she is considered impure and dangerous or because her very pregnancy places her physiologically and socially in an abnormal condition. (41)

This “abnormal” condition is the same abnormality associated with adolescence, manifested in different terms. Both the adolescent and the pregnant woman are between, the adolescent is between the oppositional pairs adult/child and the pregnancy woman between the pair self/other. She, like the adolescent, is neither one (self) nor the other (Other); she is both.

Pregnancy positions the Other as existing within, but this unborn child is not quite the Other of the Symbolic order: she is both other and not other, a part of the mother she inhabits (see, also, Irigaray [1974] 1985). It is about conceiving of the child in terms of her bodily encounter with the mother, while also taking into account the mother's bodily encounter with the child. It is not a reading that is altogether different from the relationship between brother and sister, especially, the twin status that made Alanna's cross-dressing possible. Moreover, these narrations introduce a third, a mediating option between the binaries: Alanna's offers it through a self that is somehow both girl and not girl; Aly and Daine's pregnancies through the existence of two, or more, selves/bodies within one self/body. Moreover, this reading of pregnancy has implications for subjectivity, especially when the child, or children, are born, as I discuss in the Conclusions. Here, it serves to illustrate that the representational economy of popular and media culture is flawed, both in its

insistence on the singularity of self/body and the reliability of appearance, a reading that shape-shifting develops by making manifest, on the body, the internal multiplicity that pregnancy introduces.

Shapeshifters: Animals (or humans?) in Disguise

As the shape-shifting heroine of Pierce's Immortals quartet, Daine is not entirely human: with her mother a mortal and Weiryn—god of the hunt—her father, Daine “may look like a human,” but she is not, at least not totally (1992, 70). She is also “of the People: the folk of claw and fur, wing and scale” (70). Daine is the child of a human *and* a god, and as such, she is both human and animal—because her god-father is affiliated with animals. Yet, Daine's perspective initially rejects being “of the People” (animals within this world): “‘Impossible,’ the girl said flatly. ‘Look at me. I’m pink, my fur’s patchy, I walk on two legs. I’m human, human all over’” (70). Daine rejects being of the People because she does not look the part: she is “pink,” with “patchy fur” (hair), and “two legs.” In many ways, her position marks the expected position of the adolescent girl within popular culture: you are who you appear to be. However, Daine *is* both human and animal, and in so being, the narration establishes appearance as unreliable: the body's surface, Daine's “look[ing] human” (70)—while being “of the People,” of the animal (70)—frustrates the assumed one-to-one relationship between self (being) and body (appearing), at least until she shape-shifts. The shape-shifting, while making an internal being available on the body, does not, however, invert the one-to-one relationship between self and appearance. Rather, it offers “mutation, variation, and becoming” (Seaman 2007, 247).

Furthermore, where Alanna's cross-dressing was made possible by a shared body shape (or appearance) and where pregnancy alludes to multiplicity within, Daine's shape-shifting unites these two narratives, while also extending the argument. In other words, Daine, as does Alanna, shares a bond with another, and as with “normal” pregnancy, this bond occurs internally. However, unlike Alanna's cross-dressing, Daine's shape-shifting makes explicit exactly who she is (this internal being), even if that being is quite mutable. Moreover,

Daine's "being of the people" does not remain, as is the case with pregnancy,⁹⁷ internal, Daine's shape-shifting makes the internal bond explicit on the body, blurring the border between human and animal in the process. Thus, this section is concerned with how Daine's being "of the People" is manifest on her body, thus disrupting the stability of body required by both popular and media culture, as well as the hero paradigm underscoring this mythopoeic YA fantasy. The question is, then, how is she both human and People, and how is that internal "of the People" made available?

In the first instance, Daine's internal being is made available through the narration of Cloud's (a pony whom Daine considers family) ability to see inside Daine, because they are both "of the People." Through this bond, Cloud can see inside Daine: "On the outside, the pony insisted. Not inside. Inside you're People" (1992, 70).⁹⁸ This inside that he is narrated as seeing is, in fact, a seeing of either the Gift (the "light" that "is only for humans") or, in Daine's case, wild magic, and while this plays into a difference between the Gift and wild magic, it also introduces a notion of outside and inside. Thus, where Alanna and Thom's shared body shape made that reading of bodily instability possible, it is Daine's wild magic that serves as the link—or a manifestation of the link—between Daine-the-human and Daine "of the People." Furthermore, it is this magic that allows her to, first, join her mind with the minds' of her animal friends, becoming—as Numair terms it—a "magical symbiote" ([1994] 1999, 22).

This magical symbiosis is here useful because it demonstrates—and makes possible—the connectedness of two conventionally oppositional categories: human and animal, but it is also this symbiosis that directly leads to Daine's shape-shifting.

—Make your mind like that of the animal you join [...] [t]hink like that animal does, until you become one. You may be quite surprised by what comes of it, in the end.— (20, formatting original)

⁹⁷ Birth is different. Yes, the internal multiplicity is made available externally—the child, that which causes the multiplicity, can be seen—but this making available produces another distinct self, and as such, birth is discussed in the Conclusions.

⁹⁸ Daine learns to "see inside" too, see, Pierce (1992).

Full body shape-shifting is “what comes of it, in the end”; although, the process begins with partial transformations, as Daine becomes accustomed to “think[ing] like” different animals.

In the first instance of sustained, albeit partial, bodily transformation, Daine’s ears become those of a bat, after she joins with the mind of Wisewing, a member of the “Song Hollow Colony of bats” (144).

Her ears were tired and sore, the muscles round them cramped from use. Reaching up to rub them, Daine touched a long flap of leathery skin that flicked to and fro, catching each quiver of sound in the air. (151)

Initially, this transformation is bound up in issues of possession, of that which belongs to Daine (“her ears”) and that which does not (“the long flap of leathery skin”). In so being, this hers/not hers plays into the economies that underpin contemporary Western culture. The ears are *hers*, but they are also *her*—through belonging, her ears identify her. Yet the simple inclusion of these other ears on Daine’s body insists that they too, somehow, belong to her—or, at least, that they are also a part of her—likely, owing to her internal “being of the people” (1992, 70). The surface of the body is here a place of amalgamation. Its liminality is made explicit. Furthermore, while the change itself disrupts the visual certainty of the body, the narration of the touch also, in offering an alternative way of perceiving the body, disrupts popular and media culture’s insistence on appearance.

Here, a later transformation makes this questioning of appearance even more explicit: “She looked at her hands and feet. They were still human but a fine grey fuzz covered them and the tips of her nails were black claws” ([1994] 1999, 213). Daine’s body is constructed as unstable—change is introduced onto its surface. Furthermore, this narration establishes what that change is by defining what does *not* change: the “human” that somehow exists before, and yet also after, change has occurred. The narration of bodily transformation, in other words, establishes an opposition between changed and not change, while, simultaneously, questioning it. For, by remaining “human,” despite being “covered” and despite “black claws”—despite change—the “hands and feet” in

their “not changed” states appeal to a stable core, a core of “human” that has somehow not changed during this transformation.

Chappell (2007) engages this issue through the example of how, within Pierce’s Immortals (1992–1996) quartet, “death detaches the core of a person from their material body in the human realm” and yet “continuous identity is manifested in the afterlife through an identical replacement of the body left behind” (125). Chappell makes this point through the death of Daine’s mother (prior to the quartet’s start) and the narration of Daine (and Numair) meeting her when they are sent to the Divine Realms in *Realms of the Gods* (1996). Daine’s mother died, and her body was buried in the human realm, but here, in this space of afterlife, it (still) exists. Chappell (2007) thus suggests, “bodies [...] clearly form and express a large portion of people’s continuous identities” (125), as Daine’s mother has maintained her body through life and death. However, Daine’s ability to shape-shift complicates matters. Her ability to shape-shift—to change the shape of her body, or that which should express some portion of her identity, in Chappell’s terminology—complicates popular and media culture’s economy of representation in its positing of a single, stable self. Specifically, Daine’s shape-shifting literalises the liminality of, and the bodily instability associated with, the adolescent girl, while also speaking to the wider issues of liminality associated with the period of adolescence.

This shape-shifting is, thus, quite a provocative counter to the conventional positing of (continuous) identity requiring bodily stability. In fact, Chappell (2007) argues,

Daine’s ability to transform her body into non-human shapes yet maintain a stable identity gives the impression that an essential self [...] is a core somehow attached within but not defined by one’s spatio-temporal form. In this respect, Pierce’s series emphasises the necessity of having some essential part of oneself separated from one’s body so that identity persists despite physical changes. (125)

I agree with Chappell that some sense of self—that is unrelated to the body’s appearance is necessary for Daine’s shape-shifting to occur, in that, it, like Alanna’s cross-dressing, would not be shape-shifting if Daine did not somehow remain. However, I feel that Chappell’s positing recapitulates the binary

oppositions underpinning popular and media culture, at least in as much as it presupposes the “Kantian I” that Battersby (1998) finds troubling. I am more interested in how this produces the self *through* a changing body.

The narration of Daine’s shapeshifting establishes a binary opposition between changed and not changed, only to immediately question it; in so being, this shape-shifting is explicitly about showing how an unchanging core is impossible to maintain. The notion is too rigid; change influences and modifies both the body and the core, as “they were still human *but*” demonstrates—“but” calls any stability of the body or otherwise into question (213, my emphasis). “But” introduces the possibility that neither complete change nor complete non-change has occurred thus calling the stability of both into question. The act of change produces the results of that act as existing on, or as, a continuum, effectively uniting the oppositions. In other words, while the hands and feet are claimed to be “still human,” “a fine grey fuzz” and “black claws” are not human, and while these things are now connected to the hands and feet (to that which is “human”), they are not human and potentially jeopardise the humanness of what they touch. The stability of human is worried, just as the lingering human worries the completeness of change *because* this is not about change/not changed, for all that the narration terms it as such; this is about Daine’s embodying multiplicity, change, and becoming.

For me, this narration of fantastic bodily change is a modelling of the very real (as in physical) changes associated with the adolescent girl: while the adolescent girl might not develop “black claws” or grow “a fine grey fuzz” (Pierce [1994] 1999, 213), she does (typically) begin growing underarm and pubic hair at the onset of puberty, while also in the West often experimenting with nail polish and other body modification techniques. Moreover, while Daine’s “human” appears to be expressed on the body—much like femininity—it also begins implementing a deeper sense of self, a depth pregnancy foreshadowed. Here, the allusion appears in how the change only covers her hands and feet. The “fuzz” is covering a body-cum-self that has been, perhaps, obscured rather than utterly changed, a reading that the specific location of this change—on the outer extremities—reinforces. It is about layering change onto the (unchanged) body, thus the body is the site of continuum, of continuous

possibility, in Chappell's terms. In other words, Daine's body is still body, whether it is human-shaped or animal-shaped. Akin to Meyer's changes in terms of her futuristic mythopoeic YA fantasy, these bodily changes are changes of degree, not of kind.

Yet, the body—her human body—holds an exalted position. Its "truth," which happens to be female and human, makes this multiplicity possible, a reading that the other kinds of changes Daine makes develops. While Daine can entirely shift into the form of a single animal: a wolf ([1994] 1999, 303), starling (1995, 111), hyena (266-267), and golden eagle (1996, 18), for example, and while there are many instances of her transforming parts of her body into animal parts: "using bats eyes to see in the dark" (1995, 224) or "thickening the soles of her feet by changing them to elephant hide" (1996, 44), it is an attempt to shape a human mouth on a bird that best reinforces this idea of "true shape."

It was harder to shape a human mouth and voice box in a bird than it was to give her two-legged self raptor's eyes, or bat's ears. She had no idea why that was true; it just was. (1996, 246)

While Daine may have no idea, the narration makes it quite clear: the bird is not her "true shape," thus it is not the body on which (or from which) these changes take place. Her human shape provides the base from which these transformations occur.

However, while Daine's human body may hold a privileged position in narration, the construction of this body is also more complicated: this is not a simple veneration of the human body. This is, rather, a complex offering of the body's liminality—its in-betweenness, and its potential—a point evidenced by the narration of Daine's relationship to "the wolf-shape."

Sitting down, she began to recover her true shape. It was harder than she had expected. Her body liked the wolf-shape. Bruises and hot feet notwithstanding, the wolf-shape felt good, even natural. The girl had to fight a sense that she was meant to stay a wolf [...]. At last she found her two-legged self, and slid into it. Opening her eyes, she made an unhappy discovery.

Her clothes were gone. ([1994] 1999, 309)

Daine shares a particular affinity with wolves, “liked the wolf shape” and “the wolf-shape felt good, even natural.” While this narration develops that affinity quite thoroughly, it is Daine’s return to her “true shape,” in the face of that affinity, that is here interesting, especially, as it speaks to Levana’s “true skin” (Meyer 2015b, 96). Both these figurations—“two-legger self” and “true skin”—speak to the physicality of the body and appear to establish it as site of “truth.”

In one sense, Daine’s transformations (the animal shapes that she puts on) function similarly to Alanna’s clothes and hair, to those superficial things that change in order for her disguise to occur; poignantly, changes that occur, for both girls, in order to match their external appearing with their internal being: Daine is “of People” and Alanna is coded as masculine. In this figuration, the body is the site of change and any “truth” is produced not through unwavering stability but through that change. While this passage also possibly questions the supplementarity of actual clothes—in that, Daine’s clothes are gone, when she returns to her human form—the narration does so for a reason: the human form *is both* the clothes that she “slid[es] into,” and the manifestation of, what the narration terms elsewhere, her “inner-self” (1992, 182), a self that is aligned with the human—despite its affinity with the wolf shape and its ability to shape-shift.

However, the body is also not clothes—because it is her “true shape,” as evidenced by the fact that “her clothes were gone,” and that it is from her “true shape,” and only it, that multiple bodies can be formed. The body is *both*, and this is key. It is more than one or the other, in part, because it is the very place of all these changes but also because it is the liminal space between surface/depth, and outer/inner. Sheryl Vint (2007) discusses this notion of the body as liminal in *Bodies of Tomorrow: Technology, Subjectivity and Science Fiction*.

The body is a type of threshold, occupying the liminal space between self and not self, nature and culture, between the inner ‘authentic’ person and social persona. (16)

Vint’s point is sound, though I contend that the body is not just “a type of threshold” but that it is, rather, the archetypal threshold, the single most

ubiquitous limen. There is a body associated with every self, no matter if that self is human, animal, or cyborg. Thus, a second point of contention with Vint, despite a desire to explore the post—as in expanded sense of, human—Vint’s reading still prioritises the human. For one, self and culture are human privileges. Daine’s shape-shifting includes the animal within a conceiving of the body/self, an idea that Meyer’s mutant wolf soldiers initiated, while Cinder’s cyborgian state does the same for the machine.

This blurring of the human and animal within mythopoeic YA fantasy is not confined to Pierce’s work. Sarah J. Maas’s *Throne of Glass* series (2012–on-going) offers a particularly poignant supplement to my reading.⁹⁹ In Maas’s Erilea (a Secondary World), Aelin Ashryver Galathynius—otherwise known as Celaena Sardothien and Adarlan’s finest assassin—is half human, half Fae. Within this world, the Fae are immortal beings, often gifted with magical powers. Aelin is, for example a fire wielder, as *Heir of Fire* describes (2014a). The Fae are also shapeshifters, of a kind.

All Fae possessed a secondary animal form. Celaena was currently in hers, her mortal human body as animal as the birds wheeling above. But what was his [Rowan’s]? He could have been a wolf, she thought, with that layered surcoat that flowed to midthigh like a pelt, his footfalls so silent. Or a mountain cat, with that predatory grace. (14)

While Rowan’s animal form is, despite Celaena /Aelin’s fanciful musing, a “white-tailed hawk” (4), it is Aelin’s that is the most interesting: “her mortal human body as animal as the birds wheeling above.” This narration, rather than thinking the relationship of humans and animals as binary (human/animal), offers a human-animal relationship, where human describes the *kind* of animal one is, much like wolf-animal or bird-animal would also work.¹⁰⁰ Thus, through

⁹⁹ Not least owing to the fact that this is another reworking of the Cinderella narrative, only if Cinderella had become an assassin after becoming orphaned; see Maas (2012) and (2014b).

¹⁰⁰ There are full-body shape-shifters within Maas’s world, and Lysandra, a courtesan and friend of Aelin’s, is one (2015, 310). Of this ability, Aelin muses:

Holy gods. What was fire magic, or wind and ice, compared to shape-shifting? Shifters: spies and thieves and assassins able to demand any

Daine and Aelin's very selves, these texts establish a tension between external (appearance) and internal (being). Returning to Pierce's Tortall, Daine is both human and animal, narration makes that clear. Thus, her transformation into the animals with whom she shares a unique bond is not Daine becoming something Other (animal). Rather, it is about demonstrating how she is already both. Daine is human *and* People (animals within this world). Her shape-shifting is simply the process by which this internal being is made available on the body's surface, questioning the assumed shape and appearance of human in the process.

In this way Daine's magic and shape-shifting are about making visible a human body that is formed in multiplicity and about narrating between poles of opposition (Vint 2007), an 'inter-dict' (a functioning between states), according to Irigaray ([1974] 1985, 22). For this reason, I offer Grosz's (1994) use of the Möbius strip as a way of conceiving of the body as a limen, a thing between binary pairs.

The Möbius strip has the advantage of showing the inflection of mind into body and body into mind, the ways in which, through a kind of twisting or inversion, one side becomes another. (xii)

While Grosz is concerned with the specific binary of mind/body, this inflection modelled by the Möbius strip also describes the body's liminality, while refusing to privilege one side over another and also demonstrating interdependence. Grosz further suggests,

this model also provides a way of problematizing and rethinking the relations between the inside and the outside of the subject. Its psychical interior and its corporeal exterior, by showing not their fundamental identity or reducibility but the torsion of the one into the other. (xii)

price for their services; the bane of courts across the world, so feared that they'd been hunted nearly to extinction even before Adarlan had banned magic. (310)

Like Aelin, Lysandra is stuck in a form that is not her own, not her "true skin" to borrow a phrase from Meyer. Both women are "beasts wearing human skins," as Lysandra terms it (120 and 310).

In its liminality, the body is a Möbius strip. It is both this and that, surface and depth, self and other. In these readings, the body has oscillated between serving as a “truth” of one’s self and as that which does not matter because it can be hidden, disguised. The oscillation is key, because the body is neither one nor the other, it moves between both (or all).

It is the introduction of in-betweenness that has implications for rethinking the structure of binary oppositions, while also speaking to the “in-betweenness” of adolescence. It is a reading that one final narration of Daine’s shape-shifting makes explicit. At the end of her quartet and when she is at the height of her powers, Daine is able to transform into multiple birds, at once.

There was no one bird that she drew on, but many, as Daine shaped angled wings to give her speed, a ripping beak and talons to match for combat, a starling’s talent for quick midair dodges. She stayed as large as she dared. (1996, 249)

Daine is, here, quite literally “of the People” (animals within this world)—all the People, or, at least, all the birds she draws upon. Her shape-shifting is, in this transformation, very much about expressing multiplicity. Not only does it further blur the distinction between human and animal, a blurring that Daine embodies, but it also blurs the differences between different *kinds* of birds: this is an amalgamation of “no one bird” as well as of no particular bird. Apart from the starling, narration does not name the birds whose appearance Daine takes on, and even with the one it does name, Daine does not take on its appearance but, rather, an attribute: the bird’s “talent.” In terms of the bodily transformations, the birds remain un-named; Daine is “no one bird.” For readers in the United Kingdom this is particularly poignant, as “bird” is commonly used to indicate a girl—a human girl—evidencing one further example of how these texts might hail a reader outside of the text.

Fantastical transformation aside, the adolescent girl is a shape-shifting creature: she is becoming-woman through the bodily changes of puberty. In offering a heightened form of bodily transformation, Daine’s shape-shifting not only addresses this more mundane transformation, but it also serves to rationalise it. Through the hail, this kind of modelling has the powerful potential to offer bodily instability and change as a “position to occupy;” it makes the

liminal available as a “position to occupy” (Parsons 2004, 136). Moreover, Daine’s shape-shifting offers a framework for conceiving the relationship between humans and animals not as a binary but as continuum; rather than human/animal, Daine models human-animal, wolf-animal, bird-animal, a reading that Aelin’s human-animal form supports (Maas 2012–on-going).

SEEING THROUGH THE SUPERFICIAL

Mirrors play a critical role in constructing subjectivity, both the mirrors in which we check our appearances as well as those offered by the images of media and social media. Mirrors can also be problematic. The mirrors offered by social and popular media—filtered selfies and “photoshopped” celebrities—offer a very particular way of living and being a body, one that actual mirrors (as in reflective surfaces) police through reflecting back achievement or failure. These mirrors, images and reflective surfaces, perpetuate a superficiality of self that traps girls and women within, not just their bodies but in their bodies’ appearance. However, Meyer’s *Lunar Chronicles* offer a reading of mirrors that contests dominant hegemonic mirrors, when Cinder sees herself—her whole, cybernetic parts and all, self.

A mirror filled the wall. Her own face stared wild-eyed back at her. Her ponytail was a mess: dull, tangled, in need of a wash. Her skin was too pale, almost translucent, as if the voltage had drained her of more than energy.

They’d taken her gloves and her boots and rolled her pant legs up. She was not looking at a girl in the mirror. She was looking at a machine.
(2012, 78)

This image in the mirror, as well as the seeing of it, is—like Alanna’s seeing her “twin star[ing] back” after she cross-dresses (1983, 9)—complicated. Where Alanna’s seeing her twin in the mirror conceals a reality of the body (that it is female), Cinder’s mirror image makes a body of difference available. Cinder “sees” both “her own face,” “her ponytail” and “her skin” and also a “machine.” This seeing provocatively offers a body of difference but it also offers that difference in binary terms: “girl”/“machine,” because this is still (merely) a

reflection. But, how might these texts reconfigure this mechanism of hegemonic discourses of self? Are there other kinds of mirrors?

In *The Lunar Chronicles*, mirrors are posited as having an “uncanny way of telling the truth,” at least in terms of the mirror’s capacity to expose the Lunar glamour. While queen’s glamour is called an “endless lie” because she continually presents it (Meyer 2012, 351), “just as she cannot trick the netscreens, neither can she trick a mirror” (172). While this is technically because mirrors and netscreens are not “living creatures” and therefore have no bioelectricity for manipulation (Lunars also dislike androids), it is also because, within this world, the glamour remains a superficial alteration of the perception of appearance. The glamour is just a trick. It is not real, and it is in this way that the text insists that we look below the surface, and is this seeing below the surface that the remainder of this chapter considers.

Thus, while Cinder’s cyborgian state visually disrupts what it means to be human—through the incorporation of mechanical, inorganic parts onto the surface of the body—the text makes it quite clear that this disruption goes much deeper, and it is an insistence that relies on futuristic medical technology—technology that operates rather *like* magic. For example,

Cinder opened her eyes. The net screen on the wall and changed, no longer showing her life stats. Her ID number was still at the top, headlining a holographic diagram,

Of a girl.

A girl full of wires. (2012, 82)

The netscreen, previously devoid of anything save Cinder’s “name and ID number” (78), now displays an image of Cinder, but it is an image with a difference. Where the mirrored reflection showed Cinder’s surface, this image exposes her insides—whilst not only maintaining the external form through the holographic diagram but also offering the *contours* of that external. This hologram is also a mirror, but it is a three dimensional one. The hologram has the potential to (re)create life, “it was a girl, life-size, her different layers flickering and folding into one another (2014, 302)—explicitly this is it not a flat image (“life-size”), just as it is not a dispersion of parts (Balsamo 1996), or,

even, a separating of the inside and outside (“layers flickering and folding”). This image is a Möbius strip. Moreover, this is no longer an instance of “looking at a girl in the mirror” and seeing, *instead*, “machine” (2012, 78); rather, it is looking and seeing both, simultaneously. In so being, it is quite like the three-dimensional nature of scars and that “magical” map of Owlshollow. This is about a topographical approach to the body that also takes depth into account.

The visual, multi-dimensional appeal of this image is not the only way in which it contests hegemonic discourses. There is also a layering of meaning, a history, held within the image, one that speaks to my concern with discourse in the following chapter.

But those things she had known. Those things she had expected.

She had not known about the metal vertebrae along her spine, or the four metal ribs, or the synthetic tissue around her heart, or the metal splints along the bones in her right leg. (2012, 82)

This is not the making known of the body to others—at least initially—the first narration of the hologram is Cinder’s viewing of it, and in this way, it is a making known of the body to the self. Cinder discovers that which “she had not known” about her body, and this reading of the self, in all its depth and complexity, is pivotal. This is, in other words, not the medical image that, as Balsamo argues, aids in the “assembly-line beauty” by which “‘difference’ is made over into sameness” ([1996, 58]). This image is not concerned with such aesthetics. It is, rather, about illustrating the whole of Cinder’s body. It is about re-mapping Cinder’s body.

This hologram is also important for the narrative of seeing inside that it offers. Cinder’s cybernetic makeup not only allows her to “netlink,” to access the universe’s Internet system from within her head, but her brain, which is part computer, can see through the Lunar glamour. While Cinder is not the only being who is able to see through these illusions,¹⁰¹ Cinder’s “seeing through”

¹⁰¹ Lunars have an intense dislike for mirrors, androids, cyborgs with “brain-machine interfaces” (176) and shells (Lunars, like Cress, born without the ability to manipulate bioelectricity), as these cannot be influenced by their “ability to manipulate bioelectricity” (171).

first her own glamour and then Levana's is particularly provocative, and it is so because of her liminal status: as a Lunar-cyborg, she can see through the glamour (like shells) and create one (unlike shells).

Her cyborg hand began to morph in her vision. Little wrinkles appeared in her knuckles. Tendons stretched beneath her skin. The edges softened. Warmed. Turned to flesh.

She was looking at two hands, two human hands. Small and dainty with perfectly sculpted fingers and delicate, rounded nails. She flexed the fingers of her left hand, forming a fist, then stretched them out again.

An almost giddy laugh fell out of her. She was doing it. She was using her glamour. (2013, 196)

This is the power of the glamour, and of the makeover. It also speaks to the conflation of the fleshy body with its digital image, especially in terms of the editing that occurs to those images. For Cinder, the glamour gives her the possibility of a whole fleshy body (at least appearing as such). This glamour also models the same kind of manipulation that girls outside of the texts do through photo editing software.

Yet, Cinder's cybernetic parts will not let her fall prey to the deception; they see through the glamour:

And then—too soon—an orange light flickered in the corner of her vision, her brain warning her that what she was seeing was a lie. That this was not real, would never be real. (2013, 196)

The glamour is an illusion; the selfie is an illusion, and with this netscreen embedded in her eye, Cinder has the ability to not only see through the lie, but to see "lie" and "truth" simultaneously.

She shut her eyes, sure she was imagining things, then opened them again. The diagram realigned. Lines pinpointing the exact angles of Levana's face. Coordinates showing the placement of her eyes, the length of her nose, the width of her brow. A perfect illustration overlaid the perfect woman—and they were not the same. (2012, 361)

The simultaneity of this seeing is key for in seeing both the "illustration" and the "illusion," the text calls attention their disjointedness, not the superiority of one

over the other. Moreover, these “lines,” “angles,” and “coordinates” speak to the mapping, and re-mapping, with which this thesis is concerned. Cinder’s cybernetic parts effectively allow for the re-mapping of the contours of Levana’s body in narration.

Finally, this seeing that Cinder models also narrates the complexity of seeing faced by the adolescent girl in popular and media culture, as a narration of Cinder seeing through Levana’s glamour in the Chronicles’ final text demonstrates. Here, rather than seeing both at the same time, Cinder “let the cyborg side win” (448), and the process of letting this “cyborg side win” begins with a battle between Cinder’s “cyborg eyes” and “her own brain.”

It wasn’t an easy task. Her cyborg eyes were in conflict with her own brain and the queen’s manipulation, and her mind couldn’t figure out what it was seeing. The result was a stream of confused data, blurred colors, fragmented lines trying to piece together what was real and what was illusion. (435)

This “stream of confused data, blurred colors, fragmented lines” and the difficulty “trying to piece together what was real and what was illusion” perfectly describes the position of the adolescent female girl in popular and media culture, given the bombardment of images, often edited, that she faces.

Crucially, the text demonstrates a way out of this confusion, a modelling that the continued “seeing through” Levana’s glamour makes explicit.

She stopped fighting the onslaught of data being pieced together by her brain-machine interface. The glamour was a biological construct. Using a person’s natural bioelectricity to create tiny electric pulses in the brain, to change what they saw and thought and felt and did. But the cyborg part of Cinder’s brain couldn’t be influenced by bioelectricity. It was all machine, all data and programming and math and logic. When faced with a Lunar glamour or when a Lunar tried to manipulate her, the two parts of her brain went to war, trying to figure out which side should be dominant.

This time, she let the cyborg side win. (2015b 447–448)

This is a way out of the trap of appearance engendered by the visibility of popular and media culture. Cinder demonstrates the possibility of seeing through the superficial. Thus, while Cinder’s “brain-machine” interface is not

(yet) available, media literacy, as advocated by Kathleen Sweeny (2008) in *Maiden USA: Girl Icons Come of Age*, is available, and it is a literacy that Cinder's "seeing" models. For Sweeny, media literacy is about giving girls the tools to decode the messages presented by media culture *through* placing them behind the camera rather than in front of it. In doing so, Sweeney argues that girls will "see" how the images in magazines and on television and film are created; what is this kind of seeing, if not a kind of brain-machine joining?

* * *

This chapter's case studies demonstrate inflection: they offer possibilities of living and being a body when appearance is not the only means of identifying a self, when self is not confined to a single, unified appearance—or, even, body—and when the very nature of appearing is ambiguous. In this way, the cross-dressing, glamoured, pregnant, shape-shifting and cybernetic bodies available in mythopoeic YA fantasy become bodies in-between oppositional pairs (male/female; truth/illusion; single/multiple; human/animal), while also demonstrating a possible continuum of relation that refuses the binary way of rationalising this world. The final section, thus, serves as both a call to action—bodies are not homogenous and so the inclusion of bodies of difference within discourse is imperative if the limiting, over-reliance on appearance is to be contested—and as a method—being a body is not limited to its superficial appearance and, thus, seeing through the superficial is imperative—for loosening the dominance of visibility, that is, the paradigmatic way in which the visual (appearance and images of appearances) has become not only the dominant means of perceiving this world but also of being a self in it.

Finally, the visibility—or specularization, as Irigaray ([1974] 1985) terms it—that construes appearance as marking the self is the very mechanism of the adolescent girl's exclusion from discourse. She is body, and this body is posited as natural and more real (Batteresby 1998) and thus pre- or extra-discursive. In this move, woman-who-is-body is excluded from signification. In popular and media culture she is trapped within an appearance, an appearance whose ideal is the digitally edited or enhanced image because this image is flat

and superficial. As such, these readings also have implications for the silencing, within and between binary oppositions, that woman faces. The following chapter speaks this silence.

CHAPTER FOUR

SPEAKING THE UNSPEAKABLE AND BREAKING CULTURES OF SILENCE

“There is no single truth [...]
But all these truths, woven together,
might give us a picture of what is true.
We can never see all the sky at once.”
(Croggon 2005, 46, my emphasis)

The point of the hero story is to transform chaos (darkness, the unknown, the profane) into cosmos (light, the known, the sacred). For this task to be accomplished, there has to be an “I,” a will that exists in opposition to the chaos. This “I” is the hero or, quite simply, man, and because she is not hero, woman is chaos. She is a part of that which the hero must transform; she is conquered and controlled alongside monsters, the land, nature, the unknown, in short, alongside that which the hero directs his will against. Only, transforming chaos (the profane) into cosmos (the sacred) is actually the task of religious man, according to Mircea Eliade (1959) in the *Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Yet, it is also the task of the hero, not untenable as myths were once sacred texts—the discourse, the truth—of their time. In his world-creating and world-shaping, the hero transforms chaos into cosmos, just as the priest does in his role of bringer-of-light-and-truth, as the philosopher does in his role of sharer-of-wisdom, or the psychoanalyst does in his role of un-coverer-of-inner secrets. The point: while the priest, hero, philosopher, or psychoanalyst are different descriptions of “I.” They are also merely varying labels of man, and the “truth” they offer is a discursive view of the world, in particular languages and from particular points of view. In other words, this “I” of the light—taking the shape of religious man, hero, philosopher, psychoanalyst, or, simply, man (in his relation to the mind)—is set against the chaos of the darkness, silencing woman in the process.

The various labels of woman’s condemnation as darkness (her othering)—chaos, temptress, whore and even goddess as Eliade (1959) suggests that marking off the “sacred” is, merely, another form of exclusion, exclusion through making-holy—all serve the same purpose. They exclude

woman from discourse, from language, and they do so through—and because of—her body. Thus, while silence happens in many ways and while the silencing of whole groups—based on race, religion, (dis)ability, and/or gender—has occurred and is still occurring, I am, in this chapter, concerned with a particular silence; one that is practised against the body and against woman because she is body. It is a silencing that excludes woman from discourse, from the “coining of signifiers,” as Irigaray argues ([1974] 1985, 71), and it is a silence that occurs in the everyday, ordinary space of consensus reality where it takes the shape of popular and media culture’s use of shame as the dominant means of controlling the body. Moreover, it is a silence and exclusion that the adolescent girl experiences to a heightened degree: she is both becoming-woman who is chaos as well as adolescent, a structural anomaly.

In the last chapter, I argued that this silencing and exclusion occurs in popular and media culture through representational economies that equate the self with the body’s appearance, trapping woman within a body that can never fully, or permanently, meet the ideal standards of appearance. Here, this economy of representation is managed through the mechanism of shame, one that insists adolescent girls, especially, “get [and keep] their bodies under control” (Brumberg 1998, 49). This control also means not speaking about the body, especially when it bleeds, breaks, or changes. In concluding the previous chapter, I suggested that sight is not enough, while also offering the possibility of its redemption through Sweeney’s (2008) call for media literacy. This literacy is key. Speaking about that which is unspeakable—speaking about the body, as it is the primary location of shame as well as the mechanism of woman’s exclusion—is key. I am not, however, calling for a Cixousian *l’écriture féminine*, though I do focus on women writers. Cixous (1976) calls for a cyclical way of writing, one that confuses the linear logic of the “phallogentric system” that is patriarchal, hegemonic discourse (883). Yet, in so doing, this method of writing sets itself up in antithesis to that discourse; it recreates a binary, by writing that which is Other to the hegemonic.

As a further means of escaping that phallogentric system, Cixous also offers “white ink,” as a metaphorical way of writing with and through the body in order to counter phallogentric writing that refuses the body (881). Yet, the

argument reinforces the notion that woman is “*more* biological, *more* corporeal, and *more* natural than m[a]n”; as, women—not men—are able to produce this writing (Grosz 1994, 154, emphasis original). This sort of (re)aligning woman with the body also speaks to the aligning of woman with the Lacanian Real. Naively, this Real can be associated with the “real” properties of a thing: the flesh, blood and bone of a body, for example. Thus, woman who is body-that-is-natural is this “real.” In this sense, woman is impossible—just as the child (of children’s literature) is impossible for Rose ([1984] 1992). The real, woman, and child are impossible because they are that which cannot be expressed in language. They are outside of language; this also links to Walsh (2013) and her concern with the “real” of realistic literature.

This conflation with the body (that is perceived as Real) prevents woman (and child) from entering the Symbolic, the Lacanian order of language and discourse, because this phallogentric system lacks an Imaginary—a developmental model—that accounts for this body and its multiplicity. Chapter Three was concerned with countering the images of the phallogentric Imaginary; this chapter takes issue with discourse (the Symbolic) itself. Thus, I am interested in how narrations of bodily instability speak from the silences, from the spaces between oppositions. Not only do such narrations engage the body, which is the location and mechanism of woman’s silencing within the binary pair (man/woman), but in being about instability, they also engage the space between oppositions. In this way, I agree with Irigaray’s ([1974] 1985) project of speaking from the silenced position of woman. This position is about speaking and thus engaging discourse and language from such positions in order to break the cultures of silence that surround the fleshy, physical body. In order to do so, I begin by establishing the particular shape of the silence—a culture of shame centred on the body—in the discursive space of popular and media culture.

For this reason, Lewis Hyde’s ([1998] 2008) chapter on shame is also particularly useful to my argument. Hyde employs “shameless speech” as a means of breaking through the shame that is associated with the body. In fact, Hyde argues, “the first stuttering questioning of those orders [of hegemony, of discourse] must always begin by breaking the seal and speaking about the

body" (172). The cross-dressing, shape-shifting, bleeding and cybernetic bodies—and the narrations of those bodies—break the seal. They speak the unspeakable, questioning the artifice of language in the process. For this reason, the chapter concludes with a speaking of menstruation. The perennially taboo topic, menstruation is conventionally excluded from discourse, and for Alanna, disguised as a boy and occupying a position of masculine subjectivity, her first menarche is a horrifying experience, one that makes the silence-through-shame of this bodily occurrence explicit. Especially, but not just, for Alanna, menarche requires a telling, it needs a situating within discourse to effectively normalise it, to bring it into language and out of shame.

SHAME CULTURES: THE ABSENCE OF DISCOURSE

Popular and media culture is one policed by shame. There is slut-shaming: the cultural phenomenon of shaming “a woman or a girl for being sexual, having one or more sexual partners,” or even simply “acknowledging sexual feelings” (Tekanji 2010). There is also skinny-shaming, a trend prevalent on the social media site Instagram. On the account @youdidnoteatthat, thin females (males occasionally) are shamed for posing with (high calorie) food that they “obviously” did not eat (Bahadur 2014). There are “shame suits” that exist in American high schools for students who break dress codes (Sullivan 2014), and finally, though by no means the end of possible manifestations, there is the catchall body-shaming (Tamarkin 2014). This umbrella term “body-shaming” seeks to encompass all the varieties of shame that exist—and that particularly affect adolescent girls (and women)—within this discursive space. In doing so, the term also makes the body’s centrality to this shame explicit: the body’s capriciousness, its tendency to act outside of desired parameters, engenders a silence, as we do not speak about that which is shameful. Within this framework, there are two manifestations of silence that particularly effect adolescent girls: a silence by way of *refusing to speak* about that which is (perceived as) shameful and an illusion of discourse, an *illusion of having won the right to speak*, and both involve the body.

The locating of shame on the body is a particularly integral aspect to Hyde's ([1998] 2008) argument, and it is one especially relevant to female adolescents. As Hyde suggests,

the body happens to be a uniquely apt location for the inscription of shame, partly because the body itself seems to be the sense organ of shame (the feeling swamps us, we stutter and flush against our will), but also because the context of shame, *what* we feel ashamed of, typically seems indelible and fixed, with us as a sort of natural fact. (168, emphasis original)

Hyde's description speaks to the capriciousness of the body that I mentioned above. The "against our will" is key, as the body, in its relation to our very self, is construed as that which *should* most readily fall within our will, the control of her mind. And, again, the "*what*"—the things that are posited as the most shameful: periods, urination, defecation—are all very "natural" bodily processes. In terms of my specific argument, the significance of this positioning of shame on the body is twofold: first, the female adolescent is also tied to her (developing) body, as I described in relation to biological determinism in Chapter One. Second, femininity, of specific relevance to the adolescent girl as she is (shape) changing into woman, is also positioned on the body (Gill 2007). Does it, then, follow that being (female) adolescent and feminine are also shame(ful)?

Silence, and the kind of silence that I am concerned with, is made explicit in the injunction to girls that they, "get [and keep] their bodies under control" (Brumberg 1998, 49)—"under control" means silent, not speaking out as different from other bodies, as fleshy or as fallible. For female adolescents, this control overwhelmingly focuses on her menstruating body. Brumberg details how for Victorian girls menarche (the first menstruation) was a "private affair, and girls handled the first sign of menstrual blood with enormous reserve," a claim she makes owing to the ways in which girls wrote—or, more accurately, did *not* write—about their experience of menarche (xxvii). In that discursive space, there was a lack of language with which to address the body and menstruation. In today's climate, the same lack of language seems impossible—

Cher did, after all, announce in *Clueless* in 1995, that she “was surfing the crimson wave” and “had to haul ass to the ladies.”

Yet, while Cher’s proclamation offers a kind of speaking, a kind of language that was unavailable to girls in previous generations (see, also, McRobbie 1997), it also masks the depth and potential implications of this change, and in turn becomes another kind of silencing.¹⁰² In other words, naming is powerful, but it is not always enough. There is a certain distancing, even disassociating, that can occur with names: menstruation hides behind the legitimate; “surfing the crimson wave” hides behind the euphemistic. For example, Brumberg (1988) devotes an entire chapter to “Sanitizing Puberty” (1998, 27–55), the mechanism of silence in both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Here, she suggests,

instead of seeing menarche as a marker of an important internal change in a girl—specifically her new capacity for reproduction—modern mothers typically stress the importance of outside appearances for their daughters: keeping clean, avoiding soiled clothes, and purchasing the ‘right’ equipment. (30)

Cher’s declaration that she had to “haul ass to the ladies” represents this modern take on menstruation: it is to be managed, with products and in such a way that it is never made visible, so that it never affects—disrupts—one’s appearance. Blood must never show.¹⁰³

Thus, this is a twofold reading of silence: the first is a comprehensive refusal to speak about, most often, the body, and the other an offering of

¹⁰² Newton (2016) suggests that menstruation is still “shrouded in secrecy” when it is taught in schools (107).

¹⁰³ In November of 2015, Charlie Edge and Ruth Howarth protested the UK’s “tampon tax” (a value added tax on sanitary products) by “free-bleeding” (not using sanitary products) outside the Houses of Parliament. This protest speaks to my argument on a number of levels: first, the intense focus on the sanitization of menstruation. Second, the shame of allowing blood to show, if it were not shameful, this would not be protest. Finally, the tax the women were protesting is part of a long-running campaign led by Laura Coryton. #EndTamponTax, Coryton’s campaign, has become a world-wide call to end the penalising of women, through a tax on goods specific to them, by patriarchal governments. For Edge and Howarth’s protest see: Guff (2015) and (Lara 2015). For Coryton’s campaign see, Coryton (2015) and Sanghani (2015).

discourse with one hand, only to take away its potential by limiting who can speak and how that speaking can occur, with the other. In this second sense of silence, Caitlin Moran's "speaking" offers a final poignant, and highly relevant, example, given the topics she often speaks on, including: *How to Be a Woman* (2011) and *How to Build a Girl* (2014). As a self-professed "working girl," who is no longer quite so working class, Moran speaks loudly, proudly, and frequently on issues ranging from periods to politics, and while this speaking offers an extraordinary kind of visibility, the privileged position from which Moran speaks is not available to everyone. Moreover, the recalcitrant attitude as well as the coarse tone and language she employs speaks to the superficiality of pop culture feminism (a thread of feminism outside of—and often at odds with—the more traditional academic and political modes of feminism).

Superficiality is pop culture feminism's great trick: despite feminist languages appearing to offer choice and agency existing with the cultural field (see, also, Gill 2007), this pop culture feminism suppresses issues with catchy euphemisms and apparent "obviousness," through methods such as this intense focus on sanitisation. Pop culture feminism also encapsulates a tension around, as Gill (2007) argues, "a certain kind of liberal feminist perspective [that] is treated as common sense" and feminists themselves, who are often "constructed as [...] not articulating women's desires" (161–162). There is a disconnect between a "liberal feminist perspective" (men and women are, or should be, equal) that is expected within popular and media culture, and feminists themselves (physical, fleshy women claiming the title). Feminist languages are not just allowed; they are expected, but the woman—the body—is still refused.

This trick of pop culture feminism is perfectly illustrated by how, "in millennial advertising, while representation has come to include the once-unseen 'sanitary products,' blood itself never appears," as Sweeney notes (2008, 37). Rather, an amorphous blue liquid stands in for the blood, stands in for the thing itself, and it does so because to show the blood is to be unsanitary, unclean—even when advertising the very products designed to protect girls from such stain. This discourse of cleanliness and hygiene is currently the dominant discourse of menstruation, and of how to menstruate, in which

adolescent girls have been becoming women, in this most iconic way, since the twentieth century. In so being, this discursive space refuses not only sexuality and reproduction, as hygiene comes first, an argument that Brumberg (1998) also makes, but it also refuses the very materiality, the very bloodiness of the body. Furthermore, it engenders a climate of perfectionism in which shame polices transgressions. Thus, while naming offers a kind of unlocking, a story—a making normal—that includes the potential of this bleeding is also necessary.

Hyde ([1998] 2008) does point out the discernment between “shame cultures”—which are face-to-face and in which members behave because they are being watched—and “guilt cultures”—which function through an internalisation of norms and standards—that is widely noted within anthropological studies. Given the neoliberal choice biography, popular and media culture would appear to be a guilt culture, not a shame culture, and yet, the space in which the adolescent girl exists is a complex negotiation of *both*. Yes, guilt is experienced: over eating a cupcake or that extra slice of pizza, over not spending “enough” time on homework, over liking a book or film that friends have deemed “uncool.” The list is endless. However, Hyde also suggests that shame cultures can, and do, exist within guilt cultures, for example, “all American high schools are shame cultures” and “advertising promulgates a culture of shame,” and both of these exist within the guilt culture that is popular and media culture (155). I suggest: social networking sites—especially Instagram—are also shame cultures. Shame and feeling, on the body, ashamed are not excluded from the discursive space of popular and media culture. In fact, guilt (existing through the internalisation of norms) simply serves as a deeper, more personal, manifestation of the shame felt when one’s body does not “measure up.”

This, a complex negotiation of guilt and shame, is what the adolescent girl faces on a daily basis within popular and media culture. Moreover, this guilt and shame most often focuses on her (developing) body, especially on the bodily occurrences—menstruation, in particular—that mark it as female. In shame cultures—and by extension guilt cultures, as in these the source of judgement has merely shifted from an external to an internal source—there is a silence concerning that which is shameful. As the (female) body is

overwhelmingly the source and cause of shame and guilt, the body is that which we do not speak. Thus, the aim of the chapter is to speak the unspeakable, to break cultures of silence that are engendered by shame and guilt. In order to do this, the remainder of the chapter follows a journey, of sorts. It follows Alanna's hero journey, as she becomes first Thom, then Alan, and, finally, her own gendered self. I do this in order to show not only Alanna's engagement with the conventional hero journey—especially where, in being female, her journey expands the possibilities of the hero journey—but also in order to show how the female body (that which is “real” and thus unrepresentable) is included with discourse.

WHO'S LOOKING AT WHOM?: ON THE ROAD TO BEING-ALAN

Alanna's cross-dressing in Pierce's *Song of the Lioness* quartet depends on a relationship between Alanna and Thom, between a brother and sister, a *twin* sibling pair. This twin-status grants Alanna and Thom—as children—a shared physical appearance: “In face and body shape, dressed alike, they would have looked alike” (1983, 1), and it is this physical appearance, this physical sameness, that makes Alanna's cross-dressing possible. Yet, while they share a physical appearance, Alanna is not Thom (nor is Thom Alanna). Rather, this twin status constructs Alanna as Thom's, “*living mirror*,” a term Irigaray ([1974] 1985) uses to describe the relationship between brother and sister (Alanna and Thom, as twins, merely make the mirroring explicit) (221, emphasis original). In a Lacanian model of identity formation, Alanna reflects back to Thom their shared appearance, granting him, not her, entrance to the Symbolic. It is, after all, Alanna's similarity to Thom—never Thom's to Alanna—that makes this cross-dressing possible. Thus, in this pairing of Alanna and Thom, Thom is initially the subjective agent, the individual to whom signification is available. Yet, through the process of cross-dressing, Alanna appears to develop a kind of agency, at least in the form of Alan, the boy she becomes. Thus this section is concerned with representation and signification and how Alanna—through her cross-dressed persona Alan—gains a kind of access to signification.

Thom's maleness opens up possibility: he may train to become a knight or "study religion or sorcery" (1982, 7, my emphasis). Alanna—as female—is offered no such choice: her fate is to attend the convent where she will learn "to be a lady," to: "walk slowly," "sit still," and keep her "shoulders back" (1). Yet, it is not just Alanna (the individual girl) for whom choice is denied: "*all girls* from noble families studied in convents until they were fifteen or sixteen, at which time they went to Court to find a husband" (7, my emphasis). Alanna, as representative of this "all girls" (all noble ones at least), not only lacks choice, but this lack of choice is manifested in terms of a particular control over the body, a control that echoes the illusion of bodily choice available to girls in popular and media culture; Alanna will learn bodily comportment and control (see, also, Young 2005), and it is control that popular and media culture demands of its adolescent girl.

Moreover, because Alanna is not physically male, she lacks access to representation and subjective agency. She also lacks, as do all women, access to a signifying economy of her femaleness. As Irigaray ([1974] 1985) suggests

it is not that she lacks some 'master signifier' or that none is imposed on her, but rather that access to a signifying economy, to the coining of signifiers, is difficult or even impossible for her because she remains an outsider, herself (a) subject to their norms. She borrows signifiers but cannot make her mark, or re-mark upon them. (71)

Alanna's lack of access to a signifying economy of her femaleness is a lack that always already affects women because signification is the purview of man; Alanna's "looking like" Thom merely makes this lack explicit. Moreover, this "borrow[ing] signifiers" is crucial, as the ability to deal in signification positions Alanna as reliant on her brother, further securing his agency (a subjective position) while denying hers. As female, Alanna must borrow Thom's (as male) signification, a point the cross-dressing—in that she becomes, first, Thom—demonstrates.

Thom "can imitate his [the father's] writing" (1983, 2), and in being so able, he has access to the "coining of signifiers" (Irigaray [1974] 1985, 71). He, unlike Alanna, can deal in signification, and thus it is Thom who provides

Alanna with the discursive status of “twin boy” (1983, 2). He effectively writes Alan into existence.

Thom was expert at forging his father’s handwriting. He wrote two new letters, one for ‘Alan,’ one for himself. Alanna read them carefully, relieved to see that there was no way to tell the difference between Thom’s work and the real thing. (7)

This letter creates Alan, and it is crucial that Alan-as-letter is equivalent to the “real thing” for this discursive construction makes everything that follows possible. In fact, it takes both this reading of discourse—Thom’s having access to discourse and Alanna, prior to becoming Alan, not having it—coupled with the appeal to a physical change to Alanna’s appearance for Alanna to gain subjectivity as Alan.

It is for this reason that it is crucial that Alanna’s cross-dressing begins, in Lacanian fashion, with a look in a mirror.

Alanna stared at herself in the mirror. Her twin stared back, violet eyes wide in his pale face. Grinning, she wrapped herself in her cloak. With a last peek at the boy in the mirror, she followed Maude out to the courtyard. Coram and Thom already mounted up, waited for them. Thom rearranged his skirts and gave his sister a wink. (1983, 9)

Thom’s letter writes Alan into existence, but this look in the mirror actualises—for Alanna—the discursive shift, and in so doing, the narration literalises Irigaray’s ([1974] 1985) suggestion that woman “borrows signifiers” (71). Alanna borrows Thom’s appearance, the very core of his signification. This narration also demonstrates what Chappell (2007) argues is “the symbolic castration”—despite Alanna’s lack of a penis—that “all subjects must suffer to enter the Symbolic” (93) (see, also, Lacan 2001). This castration applies to Alanna because, as Chappell adds, it is the symbolic “loss of corporeal jouissance” that occurs “with entry into language and social laws” (2007, 93). Alanna is dissociated from her body (a kind of castration) in order to, first, become Thom and then Alan. In other words, Alanna is the maternal body—or at least, as woman, he has the potential to be—thus her castration under the Symbolic is a kind of death to her own self, at least her female one.

In becoming Alan, this narration of subject formation also offers an interesting possibility for Alanna's self. Through being female while yet appearing as her brother, Alanna becomes not just the mirror but also that which is mirrored, and in doing so, her cross-dressing, and this mirror moment, lays a foundation for a metaphorical reading of being female that problematises the binary opposition between brother/sister and male/female. Alanna has become the man—her brother—that she desires to be; as such, the mirror moment demonstrates this narcissistic ideal. It is a kind of Lacanian subject formation; though, it is, perhaps, a somewhat peculiar Lacanian moment: for, it is not *herself* that she sees—and recognises—but her twin's self. He stares back—*his* pale face. Here, Alanna embodies the dialectical relationship that she and Thom shared through her serving as his mirror, and in doing so she becomes both the mirror and that which is mirrored, but in becoming the man in mirror—which effectively construes Alanna as being, in one body, both self and mirror—does she subvert the phallic specularisation upon which this narcissistic ideal and its concomitant subject position depends? Or, does she merely represent that which this phallic narcissistic ideal would see of all women?

I contend, given the setting (within mythopoeic YA fantasy) and nature (she is both within one body) of this seeing, this mirror moment construes Alanna as liminal and as thus displaying characteristics of both mirror and that which is mirrored, a point the “violet eyes” make explicit. She and Thom share these eyes, and in this moment of transformation, the eyes—not his, not hers—become theirs. They are the link between the girl she was and the boy she is becoming. The eyes literalise her liminality. Thus, while potentially ambiguous, this seeing her brother in the mirror is the start of Alanna's subject formation, as it is here that she becomes Thom, which makes Alan possible. If only because it gives a certain weight to Alanna's transformation, Thom shares no such moment of self-identification, and for this reason, “his skirts” signify differently than do Alanna's breeches. Thom is temporarily disguised. Whereas, Alanna is cross-dressed, and it is this cross-dressing that has implications for (her) gendered, subjective self.

In other words, while becoming-Thom has implications for subjectivity, this particular mode of being her brother is only ever temporary. For one, it is immediately replaced by being-Alan. Thus, the being brother is less important for subjectivity and more imperative—to this reading—for the access to the Symbolic that it grants Alanna. In other words, where my previous reading showed how she borrowed his signifiers, this reading of mirrors and the mirror moment shows how she embodies them and begins to make them her own. Alanna enters the symbolic: through her cross-dressing, her body becomes a construct, a sign, rather than the “real” that it is often associated with and that is this case of woman’s exclusion.

Thus, Alanna must “die” to her old self in order to become Alan, and this death is the conventional “belly of the whale” stage of hero patterns (Campbell [1949] 1973, 90). Alanna, effectively dies, so that she may be (re)born as Alan. As Campbell suggests:

The idea that the passage of the magical threshold is a transit into a sphere of rebirth is symbolized in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale. The hero [...] is swallowed into the unknown and would appear to have died. (90)

This is an integral part of the hero and his journey, for it is this death that sets him on the road to success, to becoming hero. It is also the patterning of adolescence: the child dies as a self in order to become adult, and as such, it is also one that speaks to Lacanian signification. The mirror stage brings the “I” into being through dying to a libidinal, fragmented existence in order to become, through the image in the mirror, the fiction (the symbolic representation) of a single unified (masculine/male) self. Moreover, it is a repetition that proposes, within three diffuse strands of discourse (myth, developmental studies and psychoanalysis), the same thing: a change, at least, in the self’s perception of himself. Alongside many feminists (including Irigaray, Battersby, and Grosz, it is here that I find fault with what are hegemonic, patriarchal discourses of the self becoming self, in that all three strands also presuppose a male-child undertaking this transition.

In this sense, Alanna’s death in order to become first Thom and then Alan follows the conventional pattern. She—representative of non-

signification—becomes Thom, the “boy in the mirror” (Pierce 1983, 9), and in doing so she is on the road to becoming an “I,” or self, capable of “coining of signifiers” (Irigaray [1974] 1985, 71). Thus, where Alanna cannot deal in the symbols necessary to write, Alan can write, and “he” can write to the father: “You [Alan] may go. Don’t forget to write to your father yourself” (52). Alan can write to the father; yet, it is important to point out that Alan is not copying the father’s writing (that is Thom’s ability). Alan has not become, or cannot become, the father (this too is Thom’s ability). It is for this reason that the mirror moment and the cross-dressing—the wearing of masculine clothes and taking on, or borrowing, a masculine subjectivity—are also not enough. While the mirror moment provides the possibility of subject formation and the collapsing of the dialectical distance between the brother and sister makes subjectivity possible, they do not guarantee it. This reading merely lays the groundwork. For Alanna, in the unique position of occupying a male-space whilst being a female, there has to be more.

Victoria Flanagan (2008), in *Into the Closet: Cross-Dressing and the Gendered Body in Children’s Literature and Film*, explores this becoming-subject-through-castration at length, in her singular focus on cross-dressing. For Flanagan, Lacan’s system of subjectification (of becoming a subject) is divided into two parts, “either ‘having’ or ‘being’ a phallus” (31) (see, also, Butler 1990, 55–73). Men symbolically always already have the phallus in the form of the penis, but women can be the phallus, and it is this being that is important for Alan. Flanagan further explains,

the determining factors of this system of gender difference are possession, or lack and absence, of a phallus. Lacan envisions femininity as a subject position characterized primarily by lack, but female cross-dressing heroines victoriously claim the cultural signifier of masculinity as their own while disguised as men. (31)

Through cross-dressing Alanna claims “the cultural signifier of masculinity”. In this way, Alanna’s becoming-Alan is an articulation of the (male) subject coming into being; as Butler (1990) suggests, this becoming rests “on the condition of a primary repression of the pre-individuated incestuous pleasures associated with the (now repressed) maternal body” (57). The female body is “pre-

individuated incestuous pleasures,” in that it could always potentially be the maternal body, and the subject coming into being must repress his mother’s body in order to become subject, to become man. In other words, under this hegemonic scheme, it is impossible to recognise that Alanna is actually both: the narration of Alanna’s subject formation collapses the dialectical opposition between self (becoming subject) and maternal body (that which is repressed in order to become subject). Alanna is both, in one body, but under this scheme, she must suppress herself. Her liminality is refused.

While girls in popular and media culture do not have to cross-dress in order to become subjective agents, they are still denied access to a signifying economy of what it means to be female outside of the patriarchal authority of the Symbolic. Angela McRobbie (2008), in *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*, offers four modes of being woman: a “postfeminist masquerade” that offers heightened femininity, the “working girl,” “phallic girl,” and the “global girl” (see, 2008, 54–94) that are the sanctioned female selves “allowed” by the Symbolic. Of most relevance, to Alanna’s cross-dressing is McRobbie’s figuration of the “phallic girl,” one who “gives the impression of having won equality with men by becoming *like* her male counterparts (83, my emphasis). While in becoming Alan, Alanna does more than simply becoming “*like* her male counterparts,” she still speaks to this figuration of the phallic girl: both Alanna and the phallic girl are refused true equality with men, as they merely give the “impression of having won equality.” This is the euphemistic and “catchy” phrases of pop culture feminism and how those phrases give the appearance of “equality, a point that a brief look at the “post-feminist masquerade” makes exceedingly well.

Drawing on Joan Riviere’s (1929) “Womanliness as Masquerade,” McRobbie’s post-feminist masquerade is the contemporary performance of femininity that girls and women are allowed in popular and media culture. This is Gill’s (2007) argument that “femininity is a bodily property” (2007, 149). For Riviere, womanliness and masquerade are indistinguishable: “womanliness” is a “mask” one may “put on [...] to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men” (35). Womanliness is a position, prescribed by patriarchy, women are allowed to adopt, just as “hyper-femininity” is the position women are allowed

to adopt, through the auspice of “free choice” in contemporary culture. For McRobbie, this reflects how

the Symbolic [is] highly adaptable and capable of operating at high speed, to pull back into the field of constraint, actions which have sought to subvert the subordinate status of femininity. (2008, 64)

Here, McRobbie shows how the post-feminist masquerade—and also, I argue, Alanna’s cross-dressing—is merely an illusion of subjectivity. Moreover, both these positions—the “phallic girl” and the “hyper-feminine girl,” operating under the “post-feminist masquerade”—refuse the female body. While this is most obvious with the phallic girl who becomes “like her male counterparts,” it can also be seen in the hyper-femininity offered by the post-feminist masquerade, in as much as a masquerade offers the performance of femininity, not a bodily being female or even feminine.

Finally, Flanagan (2008) notes,

Clothing is a potent cultural symbol of gender and sexual difference, and the wearing of the clothes deemed socially appropriate for the opposite sex is generally considered to be a transgressive and provocative act.
(xv)

This is Alanna’s cross-dressing. There is no transvestism involved because she is, here at the cross-dressing’s start, child and not yet sexual, in the ways that would signify sexuality to hegemonic discourse. Alanna’s cross-dressing—in order to gain access to the page’s wing at the palace, a traditionally male space and to the knighthood that her time spent there will produce—aligns with what Marjorie Garber (1992) describes as “cross-dressing for success” (49),¹⁰⁴ a mode of cross-dressing specifically undertaken in order to access spaces hitherto unavailable in order to achieve a particular employment or lifestyle. The whole purpose of Alanna’s cross-dressing is to gain access to becoming a knight. In order to do this, she adopts, first, her brother’s signification—in

¹⁰⁴ In fact, Chapter Two of Garber (1992) is entirely focused on this particularly female-centric form of cross-dressing in order to ‘better’ oneself. It, again, reiterates that the male or masculine identity is deemed normal, as why would any male need to cross-dress in order to be more successful (41–67).

terms of his appearance—before developing her own, unique, masculine signification through the persona Alan (see, also, Brugger-Dethmers 2012). It is, as Flanagan suggests, a “provocative act,” in that Alanna’s gaining any form of signification—while still being female—questions the presupposed maleness of signification, that is discourse, language.

However, it is a limited act: Alanna may be able to become Alan—she may gain a subjective position—but she does so at the *expense* of her femaleness. In other words, while Alanna’s gendered self may die in order for her to become Alan, her sexed-self—her female body—remains, a point the quartet, and especially *Alanna: the First Adventure* (1983), is quite preoccupied with reinforcing: “ye’ll be turning into a woman” (14); “Ye’re turnin’ into a woman, aren’t ye?” (106); “Alanna explained quickly that she was a female, not a male” (136); “You’re a female, child, no matter what clothing you wear” (137). Thus, in order to become Alan, to operate in a mode of signification, Alanna’s “death” includes—it requires—the refusal of this female body, and it is a violent refusal, a violence that is reflected in the linguistic shift from Alanna to Alan. The elision of the diminutive ending (na) is a kind of linguistic death, offered initially by Thom’s writing Alan into existence, but one that is also mirrored outside of these texts when Jamie becomes James; Ollie becomes Oliver; Katie becomes Catherine. Here, it is not just that Alanna puts on “boy’s clothes”; it is, rather, she performs masculinity to such an extent that she becomes “he,” on a number of levels. Significantly, she must also refuse her female body in order to maintain this disguise and to achieve the access to signification it grants.

SILENCING THE (UNRULY) FEMALE BODY

“For what one covers one also consigns to silence.”
(Hyde[1998] 2008, 169)

In order to become Alan, Alanna must sacrifice her female body; she must silence it, and it is a sacrifice—a kind of death—that the text makes explicit in its preoccupation with how Alanna maintains her cross-dressed persona, especially once she becomes a “real girl” (2000, 125). Once this occurs, Alanna must suppress her female body in order to remain Alan and to continue in this

mode of signification. This suppressing of her female body begins with the development of her breasts.

Suddenly she froze before her long mirror. Watching the glass closely, she bounced up and down. Her chest moved. It wasn't much, but she had definitely jiggled. Over the winter her breasts had gotten larger. (106)

Speaking back to the narration in which Kel became a "real girl" (2000, 125), this passage develops the centrality of breast development to becoming-woman; becoming-woman involves a shape-change.¹⁰⁵

In one sense, this implies that the breasts were, somehow, always already present, at least in as much as, "over the winter" they "had gotten larger," not that they had come into existence from nothing. They were already there, just not "larger." However, it is certainly their visible manifestation that directly impacts Alanna's sense of self. So much so that it causes her to "fr[eeze]," to pause her actions and re-engage the body ("watching closely"). Yet, alongside this controlled action, the body itself "jiggled," not to mention that it "had gotten larger," and it is this unplanned and uncontrolled action that is worrying. Finally, contrasting this mirror moment with the moment in which Alanna saw not herself but her brother is also quite useful ("Her twin stared back, violet eyes wide in his pale face" (1983, 9)). Where that moment granted Alanna signification (as Thom), this moment is a cause of "tears of fury" (106)—because the female body threatens to break through the disguise.

This "problem" of the female body is a strong narrative thread throughout Alanna's time as Alan, and the ways in which her female body must be bound—in order to appear male—are of the most relevance to my current concern with the silencing of the female body in order to achieve and maintain subjectivity. For example,

¹⁰⁵ In the narration of Alanna telling Gary, a friend and once fellow trainee knight, of her disguise, his first question is "Where are your breasts?" (1984, 189). It is almost as if, within this world, breasts have the magical power of making one a woman, or not.

It wasn't easy to live with the binding on her chest. For one thing, her growing breasts hurt, though luckily they remained quite small. She was twice as careful now about how far she opened her shirt. (1983, 107)

The female body is refused, the text makes this clear with the "binding"; however, it also reinforces how difficult this is by suggesting "it wasn't easy" and how the "growing breasts hurt." However, this is not entirely about refusing the female body through its suppression, as Alanna is also "twice as careful now about how far she opened her shirt," this refusal is also about not revealing her female body or, even, the binding that contains it. Finally, Alanna is never narrated as padding anything; it is always about "binding" her body or, later, wearing "bandage" to "stop the red flow" (132). It is never about creating the male body underneath her clothes; it is always about suppressing the female one, a suppressing that, as I have discussed, adolescent girls also face in the form of living up to the ideal body.

While the disguising of her femaleness through the binding of her breasts is the central means by which Alanna constructs her body as male, the text does offer a bodily marker of maleness—a changing voice, "his [Prince Jonathan's] voice was beginning to boom and crack"—that Alanna must also affect through her body, "soon Alanna would have to start faking the voice-change herself" (1983, 118). Here, the narration offers a bodily property—in as much as the voice change is a bodily occurrence—that Alanna must perform. Yet, this is also not the same as constructing a bulge in one's trousers or binding the breasts, as these alter the contours of the body. In other words, I have been concerned with the ways in which Alanna bodily constructs herself as male, a construction that depends on the suppression of her female body, not on the creating of a male body underneath her clothes; yet, the distinction is complex, and in offering this example of a male bodily change that Alanna must perform, the text illustrates the complexity to the relationship between the performance of gender and the physical, fleshy body behind and within those performances.

In the main, Alanna's body must be suppressed in order for her signification as Alan to be achieved, and this suppression speaks to the bodily suppression that all women face. In other words, more widely than this cross-dressing, Alanna's becoming Alan is a playing out of Ideal female subject

formation under the law of the Symbolic. The maternal body, that is one's own, must be suppressed: Alanna achieves this by cross-dressing; women in contemporary Western culture, through the frames of selfies and through continually working to meet hegemonic ideals of appearance. There are countless examples of this kind of refusal of the female body within popular and media culture; it is at the heart of recent controversies and dialogues regarding public breastfeeding and the refusal of social media sites (like Facebook) to allow photos of that, and of childbirth, to be posted. It is also in the Twitter storm over Ariel Winter's 2016 Screen Actor Guild Awards (SAGs) gown, as it revealed her breast reduction scars. The SAGs are a high fashion, high glamour, event, and Winter's scars questioned the superficial femininity required of women in that space. Winter's response on Twitter (@arielwinter1)—the scars “are a part of me and I'm not ashamed of them at all”—not only speaks back to my concern with scars in Chapter Three but it also reflects the suppression, or how it “should” be suppressed, of the female body in contemporary Western culture (Winter 2016).¹⁰⁶

Finally, while Alanna cross-dresses and thus silences her female body in order to become Alan, the silencing of her body is but a silencing of the female body that occurs throughout hegemonic discourse. Alanna—as Alan—embodies the Symbolic order's ideal female self, a self that refuses the female body, a reading that is actualised in Alanna's symbolic death (to self) in order to become, fully, Alan. Given this, it is useful, if not also provocative, to consider Alanna as Alan, particularly in a narration in which Alan asks Mistress Cooper (an older woman) for assistance in learning “to dress like a girl” (1984, 137).

MAKEOVER OR DRAG? (IT'S DRAG)

At this stage, Alanna is Alan. S/he has bested the bully Ralon who was, at the time, a page and older as well as bigger (see, 1983, 73–79); saved Prince Jonathan from a sweating sickness sent to destroy the Royal family (see, 1983,

¹⁰⁶ Of Winter's decision to undergo breast reduction surgery, see Radloff (2015). Of the media coverage, see, for example, (Couch 2016) and (Denton 2016).

99–103); defeated—alongside Jon—the ancient and immortal Ysandir (see, 1983, 193–206); been made the Prince’s own Squire and has seen war (see, 1984, 67–134). She, as he, has performed the deeds of masculinity so well that her maleness—despite the changes her body has undergone—is not questioned. As Jon notes after they have defeated the Ysandir and he learns that she is a girl, “Girl, boy or dancing bear, you’re the finest page—the finest squire-to-be—at Court” (1983, 215). Alanna’s sex no longer matters, at least to Jon. Her deeds, her performances of masculinity, have earned her the right to try for her shield. In short, she—as he—has become a hero, and she now wishes to learn how “to dress like a girl” (1984, 137). In this way, while the mirror moment initiated the process of Alanna’s subject formation (of her becoming an active agent), her makeover—her (re)transformation into a girl—offers another.

In the first instance, this makeover—despite Alanna’s “being Alan”—has little to do with announcing her true sex, or even her ‘true’ self. Coram and Maud, the children’s caretakers, know that Alanna is a girl, as they both assisted in the deception, both Mistress Cooper and George (Cooper’s son, king of thieves and Alanna’s friend) have known that Alan is ‘really’ Alanna since her first menstruation.¹⁰⁷ More, Sir Myles has suspected since witnessing Alan(na) healing Jon from the “Sweating Fever” in Alanna’s first year of page training (1983, 82). Calling on the Great Mother, Alanna heals Jon with the goddess’s assistance, and as this healing occurs, “Myles stared. He did not hear a boy-child calling the Prince. He heard a woman’s voice” (1983, 102). While the goddess’s role in the healing allows for some ambiguity as to who was speaking, it is noted that Myles from this point on suspects,¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Here, Alanna seeks, with George’s aid, the help of a “healing woman,” I discuss this in detail below (1983, 133).

¹⁰⁸ See, also,

Alanna looked up, impatient. “The masquerade is over. Myles, all these men know, you should too, I’m a girl.”

‘But I *do* know,’ Myles said quietly. ‘Thank you for telling me at least, but I have known for years.’ (1984, 220)

One of my teachers, Sir Myles of Olau guessed. I had to use magic to save Prince Jonathan when he had the Sweating Sickness, and Myles was watching; he must have seen something that gave me away. (1986, 30)

There is a particularly close relationship between Alanna and Myles. Alanna was assigned to serve him at court dinners when she was a page and the assignment has developed into a mentor/mentee, father/son (daughter) relationship. Myles is also the court drunk, a flaw—but also a performance that he hides behind. In other words, despite appearances, he is constructed as more perceptive than most and is thus able to see through Alanna's disguise.

Finally, Prince Jonathan also knows her true sex: Ylon and Ylanda, the last of the Ysandir race, revealed Alanna's sex to him by magically removing her clothes during their battle. Instructing Jon to “see your companion for what she really is!” (1983, 199), their interference—their ‘revealing’ of her sex—leaves Alanna wearing just “her belt and scabbard” (199). She is left with the most masculine piece of her uniform: her (phallus) sword. Garber (1992) insists that men do not unequivocally possess the phallus; in that, the penis is not necessarily it: “the penis is an organ; the phallus is a structure” (119). The phallus is a way of conceiving of the world in terms of binary oppositions, and the penis is its symbolic representation. Alanna is man, but here, when her true sex is revealed—when “what she really is,” a female, is revealed—the phallus-sword remains (1983, 199). The marker of her maleness remains because Alanna has become Alan.

It is in this situation that Alanna seeks the help of Mistress Cooper: “would you teach me how to dress like a girl?” (1984, 137). In other words, Alanna is very much Alan, though always bearing in mind that this cross-dressing has seen her become both her bother Thom as well as Alan, a character in his own right. Thus, Alanna's makeover—and the subsequent girl disguise that she adopts in order to venture “into the city, getting used to her skirts and learning about things most girls her age took for granted” (1983, 144)—becomes an additional instance of cross-dressing. This is Alan (a boy) dressing as Alanna (a girl), a reading the text makes explicit at Alan's first dress fitting: not only does Mistress Cooper suggest that s/he is “worse than a city lad getting fitted with his first pair of long breeches,” but Alan/na also complains, once the

dress has been fitted, that “it [her feminine appearance] doesn’t look right [...] It looks like Squire Alan in a girl’s dress” (1984, 138). Reinforcing my view that Alanna has become Alan, Alanna not only fails to meet expectations of feminine performance—she is acting “like a city lad”—but she also fails to meet expectations of feminine appearance—“it doesn’t look right.” Where the makeover of popular and media culture is about becoming more, or better, feminine (Cinderella’s “sparkle-mation” is the ideal example) and about possessing a certain self-determination through such activity, Alanna’s makeover does something else—because it is really Alan’s. Rather than a neoliberal moment of self-actualisation through bodily self-improvement, this makeover offers another instance of cross-dressing: of male-to-female cross-dressing. This makeover offers Alan-in-drag as its result, and in so doing, it offers a rearticulation of the makeover narrative. It offers a mode of being female that, rather than being dependent on the body’s appearance, is open to interpretation.

However, before exploring the ramifications of this makeover-as-drag, it is useful to consider what it does take—a change to her hair—for Alanna to appear feminine, not merely “like Squire Alan in a girl’s dress” (183). According to Mistress Cooper, Alan’s makeover is not complete with just a change of clothes; it is not complete “because we’ve done nothing with Squire Alan’s hair” (138). Hair is pivotal. Not only did it take cutting Alanna’s hair in order for her to appear as Thom, but it also takes another change to her hair in order to complete the makeover. In many respects, this is another articulation of liminality. The hair (part of the body) is both that which can change (length) and that which cannot change (colour). Dyeing her hair is not on offer: the red hair, of appropriate length, must mark her as Thom in order to initiate the cross-dressing, and once this learning “to dress like a girl” occurs, she—as Alan—is known to have red hair (1984, 137). Still, the hair began this transformation into Alan, so it follows that the hair must also participate in

Alan's transformation into Alan(na).¹⁰⁹ For this reason, Alan dons a "black wig" to go out "in public" (152).

Moreover, hair is not only important to Alanna's narrative; it is also an integral marker of femininity in popular and media culture: long flowing locks are a key aspect of heightened fantasy femininity, especially youthful fantasy femininity. A walk through my midlands' town-centre at the end of the school day indicates as much: the overwhelming ubiquity of not just long, but extremely long, hair on young girls is astounding. My sister, teaching in an American high school, notes a similar situation. Young girls, on the whole, just do not have short hair, and their hair is a marker not only of their femininity but also their youth.

Returning to Alanna's cross-dressing and what I consider to be her subsequent girl disguise, the hair remains integral. On her seventeenth birthday, Alan goes for a walk in the palace gardens as a girl, as s/he is narrated thinking "there was no law that said she had to be a boy on her seventeenth birthday" (1984, 153). In order to do this, s/he first retrieves her "pretty clothes—a lace-trimmed chemise, delicate silk stockings, tiny leather slippers, a purple silk dress" from "the wooden chest she kept at the foot of her bed, locked and magically protected" (152). While it is interesting enough that this whole endeavour is described in such furtive and evocative/sumptuous terms—lace-trimmed, delicate, tiny and silk—the fact that it is "thinking of Delia" that sends her there is even more so, as this thinking offers a complicated portrayal of desire. In one sense, it offers the possibility of Alan being sexually attracted to this "beautiful" woman, but it also simultaneously posits Delia as an example of femininity that Alanna should emulate: "she [Alanna] wasn't a beauty like Delia, but she wasn't a hag either" (152). Not only is it now impossible to separate, at least, this cross-dressing (Alan as a girl) from issues of sex and sexuality, but it

¹⁰⁹ I use the figuration Alan(na) to linguistically mark the gendered identity that Alanna adopts after being Alan. There is no straightforward return to Alanna. There cannot be; she has become Alan. Alan(na) represents this combination, while speaking to the changes that have occurred in order to produce this particular subjectivity.

also simultaneously posits Alan(na) as in between. She is neither Alan nor Alanna, just as she is neither “beauty” nor “hag.”

Owing to this liminality, it takes—even with these clothes that are heavily coded as feminine—“the black wig she normally wore in public” because “there weren’t enough violet-eyed redheads around” (152–153) in order for Alan to appear as a girl. The clothes—again—are not quite enough, so much so that Alanna wears a wig as “some kind of disguise” (153) when leaving her rooms as a girl. In other words, Alanna, crossed-dressed as Alan, must wear a disguise in order to be—to appear as—the girl that she already is, in that, even if she was “only a little man”/her brother (Freud [1933] 1973, 151). Alanna is, having experienced menarche and breast development, a “real girl” (2000, 125). In as much, this is—rather than a makeover and Alanna’s coming into appropriate femininity—Alan in drag.

Hair is complicated and it plays a fundamental role in Alanna’s cross-dressing. However, in all this preoccupation with Alanna/Alan’s hair, the absence of a narration regarding body hair is striking. In fact, only once in the entire quartet is Alanna referred to as a “beardless youth” (1988, 1). Ironically, this is after she has revealed her “true sex” and at the start of the final book of her quartet. In *The Last Taboo: Women and Body Hair*, Karin Lesnik-Oberstein (2007) opens by calling attention to how “the hair on the top of women’s heads is valued and admired,” while they “remove the hair on their bodies” (1). Lesnik-Oberstein also suggests that body hair is never seen, even “when there are references to women shaving, such as in some American sitcoms” (1)—the parallel to my reading of menstruation and the invisibility of its blood is provocative. Here, in a narration of cross-dressing—in which hair plays such a pivotal role—the absence of (body) hair reinforces Lesnik-Oberstein’s view that female body hair is taboo.

Finally, for Garber (1992) female-to-male cross-dressing is typically not regarded as transvestism, which involves a sexualised fetish for wearing the clothes coded for the opposite sex. Garber goes as far as to suggest that that as “women are regarded as having not sexual but cultural desires” (i.e. to improve their cultural standing by cross-dressing), female-to-male cross-dressing cannot be transvestism. Thus, while this narration of Alanna masquerading as a black-

haired girl on her seventeenth birthday plays at the edges of such a fetish—if only in an initial ambiguity as to what about “the sight of Jonathan dancing with Lady Delia” makes Alanna “too restless to socialize, and too nervous to sleep” (1983, 152), the object of Alanna’s desire is Jonathan, not Delia: “Alanna’s lips quivered. She wanted Jonathan’s love. To be honest, she had wanted it for a long time” (156). In this way, it is not Alanna’s (homosexual) desire for Delia that is at play here, but, rather, some mutual desire between Jonathan and Alan(na)-in-drag.

For this reason, Alanna only gains her a sort of pseudo-signification. One that, while valuable for problematising woman’s exclusion from discourse or signification—that occurs because of, and through, her body—the female body, has not been engaged as female in this cross-dressing, an issue that I address in the final section of this chapter. In many ways, it is a problem of mirror(s), the mirrors that pervade this thesis in terms of how the adolescent girl constructs herself in a digital, temporary world in which femininity, what it means to be female, exists on the body as well as the mirror moment that Alanna experiences in order to become Alan. According to Irigaray, “really successful femininity cannot lay claim to being ideal or confer an ideal upon itself. It lacks a mirror *appropriate* for doing so” ([1974] 1985, 105, emphasis original). This is why Alanna’s subject formation, as a metaphor for the subject formation all women experience under hegemonic regimes, includes her seeing Thom in the mirror. There is no Imaginary for the female-subject, for an embodied female subject, and it is a reading demonstrated through the horror of the blood, of menstrual blood.

THE HORROR OF THE BLOOD

“Blood is burned to cinders in the writing of the text of the law”
(Irigaray [1974] 1985, 221).

For Alanna, disguised as boy whilst training to become a knight and—crucially—without a mother, menarche is a horrifying occurrence:

She got out of bed—and gasped in horror to find her thighs and sheets smeared with blood. She washed herself in a panic and bundled the

sheets down the privy. What was going on? She was bleeding and she had to see a healer; but who?" (1983, 132)

Thus, the narration of Alanna's transition into womanhood begins with her seeking the help of a "healing woman," as "she was bleeding [...] from the secret place between her legs" (132-3). Masquerading as boy, Alanna seeks the help of this healing *woman* because, in this moment of, arguably heightened, femaleness, she does not know her body; the "bleeding" has no meaning. Occupying a position of masculine subjectivity but having experienced this bleeding, Alanna's menarche quite literally demonstrates Irigaray's ([1974] 1985) reading of woman's position within patriarchal, hegemonic discourse. Taking issue with the economy of representation underscoring the discursive space of Western philosophy, Irigaray claims that the female body is rendered unavailable as a means of signification because the "blood"—menstrual blood—"is burned to cinders in the writing of the text of the law" (221).¹¹⁰

Alanna's disguise, and her subject formation as Alan, illustrates the unavailability of the female body within hegemonic discourse, it appeals to a visual representation of the lack, a lack of "access to the signifying economy" of femininity that all women face (Irigaray [1974] 1985, 71). Alanna "remains an outsider," the epitome of being "subject[ed] to their [masculine] norms," and in this time of crisis, the physicality of the body is not enough: she lacks the ability to read, to understand, its signification (71). Without that ability, "the horror of the blood," as it is construed in hegemonic discourse, is reiterated, and in order to neutralize that horror, a rearticulation of the body must occur (228). For this reason, this section is concerned with establishing the horror of the blood, both in terms of Alanna's "gasp[ing] in horror and, more widely, the silence and horror with which the blood is approached in popular and media culture (as representative of a hegemonic space).

Thus, at the sight of the blood, Alanna seeks the help of a "healing woman" (1983, 133), and it is this *woman* who gives the bleeding signification:

¹¹⁰ While there is not space to fully develop the issue here, Cinder—her very name—and that the burning of her body precipitated her transformation into cyborg is highly relevant and poignant.

“you poor child,’ she chuckled. ‘Did no one ever tell you of a woman’s monthly cycle? The fertility cycle?’” (136). Initially, this confirms my earlier reading of Alanna as somehow simultaneously a child who is not yet a woman and a woman, or, at least, female. It is an issue that the text addresses through the distinction of being female: the telling of this bleeding begins with Alanna confessing, “that she was a female, not a male” (136). It is this *being female* that not only makes both the telling and the bleeding possible, but it is also the female that, here, bridges the space between child and woman. Child and woman are thus constructed, like gender or clothes, as superficial to the body, to the core that is, here, female.

Yet, it is not just for Alanna—who at this point is Alan—that this telling is imperative. Her disguise, as well as her masculine subjectivity, makes the need for a conversation around the bleeding imperative, but Kel also receives, and needs, a telling of the bleeding, despite remembering “several talks she had with her mother” (2000, 97). Crucially, “Keladry of Mindelan would not have to hide her sex for eight years as Alanna had done” ([1999] 2004, 1). Kel—who is not disguised as a boy and who has a mother—does possess the ability to understand the signification of the bleeding, though it must be remembered, “blood was on her loincloth and inner thighs. She stared at it, thinking something dreadful was happening. Then she remembered several talks she had with her mother” (2000, 97). For both girls, the materiality of the blood is the same; it is blood from, as Alanna’s narration terms it, “the secret place between [their] legs” (1983, 132). Yet, while this bodily phenomenon—the blood—is the same, their understanding—or lack thereof—is not, and it is a difference wrapped up in conversation, or language: Kel “remembered several talks she had with her mother” (2000, 97). The figure of the mother, as is becoming apparent, is key, a concept that I return to in the Conclusions. Here, it is important that Kel “remember[s]” the meaning of the bleeding because of her conversation with her mother, whereas Alanna shares no such remembering.

Within popular culture (hegemonic spaces), menstruation, when it is discussed at all, is frequently associated with horror. Moreover, menarche and more generally female adolescence itself has been historically been likened to monstrosity, as *Carrie*, both the novel (King 1974) and the film (De Palma 1976)

exemplifies.¹¹¹ Both have also been linked to a kind of animality, as is also the case with the horror film *Ginger Snaps* and its two teenaged protagonists (Fawcett 2000).¹¹² While the references to the “horror of the blood” as Irigaray so aptly describes it abound, YAL also offers its own pertinent examples, one of which is *Only Ever Yours* (O’Neil 2015a), a satirical rendering of popular and media culture set in a dystopic future where women are created for the pleasure of men.

Genetically engineered for perfection and existing on medications that control their bodies: SleepSound to ensure a good night’s sleep, Kcal to prevent weight gain, and antiwomenstruation medications to stop them menstruating, the eves, as they are called, are more robot than human. Yet, human they are, as the many medications to control their human bodies and emotions attest. Frieda, the heroine, is the first of the eves to experience menarche, and it is a horrifying experience.

I [Frieda] woke in the middle of the night. I could feel something seeping away from the very centre of me. I blinked in the dim light of the night-time lamps, blinking again and again, but it was still there, a shadowy puddle oozing through my new sheets. I shrank away, pulling myself into the corner, away from it, but it was on my hands and it was sticky on the backs of my legs and it was spreading everywhere. I couldn’t stop it.

I screamed and screamed and screamed. (195)

This, quite dramatically, demonstrates the horror (“screamed”) of the blood, but it also explains why—for Frieda, and by extension, adolescent girls more widely—the blood is horrific: *it* puddles and oozes, and *it* is sticky and impossible to stop. The repetition of “it” intensifies the feeling of horror created

¹¹¹ *Carrie* has been much analysed for its navigation of the feminine and feminist and its handling of menstruation. See, Moseley (2002), Clover (1993) and Creed (1993).

¹¹² While I address issues of shape-shifting (often termed metamorphosis, in for example, the work of Lassén-Seger (2006) and Chappell (2007) throughout this thesis, *Ginger Snaps* alludes to a were-wolf motif that is strongly present in terms of both animal studies, which my reading of shape-shifting will touch upon, as well as the perceived horror of a girl’s transition into woman. Regarding werewolves in Western culture see: Otten (1986), Douglas (1994), Bourgault (2006), and McMahon-Coleman and Weaver (2012).

by this narration, especially in the passage's refusal to identify, to speak, the blood. The passage also gets to the core of the "problem" of menstruation: "I couldn't stop it" (195). While this is particularly relevant to Frieda—in the novel's world of uber-heightened body surveillance—it also describes the plight of the adolescent girl in popular and media culture.

Furthermore, Frieda is mocked for allowing her body to express itself in such a way, and through the Eves' tie to Adam and Eve, it is a suppression of the body that includes biblical allusions. The red blood is a curse: "chastity-ruth hung the tainted sheets outside my cubicle for the five days that I bled as a sign that I was unclean. We knew then. We knew this was our curse. We knew it had to be hidden" (196). The "curse" that is this bleeding is weighty, and it is useful returning to Hyde ([1998] 2010) for an explanation as to why.

The organized body is a sign that we are organized psychologically and that we understand and accept the organization of the world around us. When Adam and Eve cover their genitals, they simultaneously begin to structure consciousness and to structure their primordial community. (169)

Only Ever Yours (2014) and the bleeding that is a "curse" stems from this very biblical structuring. In bleeding on her sheets, they become "tainted" and a marker of how Frieda's body has failed because it has bled. Moreover, because the "organized body is a sign that we are organized psychologically," it also speaks to how Frieda has, as an Eve, failed. So much so that one of the other eves muses over a red velvet cupcake that, "'It's so red.' She giggles. 'It reminds me of when you got your first womenstruation. Your bed looked like a crime scene'" (193). In bleeding, Frieda breaks the rules, and it is a "crime."

Yet, while the harsh reality often found in dystopian fiction is useful, in that it is another kind of engagement with the unspeakable, it is not about providing the same kinds of narratives of acceptance and agency around that unspeakable that mythopoeic YA fantasy can, and does, offer, and such conversations are crucial—a point Lucy Powrie (LucytheReader 2015), a hugely successful teenage blogger and "booktuber" (someone who posts videos about books on, typically, youtube) who works under the moniker Lucy the Reader, discusses in a vlog on "Periods in YA." Here, Powrie is concerned with how

“we’re taught from a very young age not to talk about menstruation and that its embarrassing, weird and kind of gross” (n.p.). She further mentions, it would’ve been such a great comfort to me to read about girls who were menstruating as well,” also noting that she experienced menarche quite early and before all of her friends. Powrie, in this way, makes a case—“such a great comfort”—for the inclusion of narrations of menstruation within YAL. Yet, YAL does not frequently include such narrations, suggesting through its interpellative role that the ideal (female) adolescent should not be seen as menstruating.¹¹³

In other words, the literature, by neglecting the topic, both reinforces and constructs the shame around menstruation. Moreover, Powrie quite poignantly asks how might *The Hunger Games* (2008–2010) or *Twilight* (2005–2008), examples of hegemonic YA fantasy, have been different had Katniss or Bella had their periods within the stories, while also musing on how inconvenient that might have been for Edward, Bella’s love interest and a vampire. Musing aside, Powrie has a valid point: both of these texts have been, and still are, hugely successful, not least owing to their adaptations as film. Yet, this very ordinary bodily function is never mentioned. As Powrie suggests and exemplifies in the vlog post, we have to “break the stigma surrounding menstruation” by talking about it (n.p.),¹¹⁴ and while this is beginning to happen—and is at the heart of *Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret* (Blume 1970)—I am concerned with the conversations—shared between adolescent girls and older women—about menarche, as I believe these are essential to “break[ing] the stigma.”

The telling of this bleeding, the conversation around it, is integral because the telling gives the bleeding (the physical thing) meaning within discourse, within language (that is to say the Symbolic). The telling provides

¹¹³ For other discussions of the absence of menstruation in YAL, see, for example, Cummins (2008), Sayantani (2010), Burns (2013), and Jensen (2014).

¹¹⁴ For realistic YAL that includes menstruation within its narrative frame, see: though by no means exhaustively, Mayhew (2013), O’Porter (2013), Pratt (2014) Bannan (2015) Bourne (2015) Heathfield (2015) Williamson (2015). In terms of speculative fiction, including mythopoeic YA fantasy, see, again not exhaustively and not including texts that I discuss in detail, Cashore (2009) and (2010), Maas (2012), Rossi (2013), and Marchetta (2014).

signification, and in doing so, “the horror of the blood,” as Irigaray terms it ([1974] 1985, 228)—and as echoed so beautifully by Alanna “gasp[ing] in horror to find her thighs and sheets smeared with blood” (1983, 132)—is neutralised. It is, as Alanna suggested, made “normal.” This thesis is about making normal, about making normal that which is considered abnormal. Chapter Three focused on appearance and the strict, limited appearance that is expected of girls and women, and this chapter is concerned with discourse itself, with how the female body, through its bleeding, may be made normal. The simple fact that these stories exist is crucial to this aim. Thus, the rest of this chapter is concerned, first, with undoing the dominance of hegemonic discourse by questioning, through Daine’s shape-shifting ability, the truth of discourse’s rendering of the world. From the unlocked potential of discourse, I move to a speaking of the female body in order to include it within language, within discourse to make the bleeding, and the blood, normal. The hero story tames the other by speaking it, by narrating the story of the hero conquering his foe, so why not do the same for the horror of the blood?

DAINE’S MAGIC: QUESTIONING THE NAMES OF THINGS

There is a consensus within critical theory that engages the animal that, as Kari Weil (2012) suggests, animals are “being[s] that resist our flawed system of language” (12). Animals are posited as outside of representation (the Symbolic), much like woman (who is body). For this reason, metamorphosis, or fantastic change, is often seen as an escape from language and a return to the real (Clarke 1998; Weil 2012), especially when that fantastic change involves a human changing into an animal. While metamorphosis is the most commonly employed term for describing such transformations (see, also, Lassén-Seger 2006; Chappell 2007; Waller 2009), I use the term shape-shifting, initially because it is the term used within Pierce’s Tortall universe, but also for other, more specific reasons that this section develops. Thus, this section is concerned with the implications of perceiving fantastic change, particularly fantastic change that sees a human change into an animal, when “animal” is posited by many critics as outside of signification because it is more “real,” a positing that has to do

with a lack of language. Moreover, this section also engages a series of oppositions: the human/animal and self/other, as well as an opposition established in terms of Gift/wild magic, a distinction between the sanctioned or legitimate magic of Tortall and the “wild magic” Daine possesses. I do this in order to show how these texts are, more widely than in terms of menstruation, concerned with speaking the unspeakable.

This reading is about, in many ways, questioning the names of things—or, our consensus agreement on the names of things, as that is what gives them power. Being both human and “of the People” (animals within this world), Daine is an embodiment of this questioning because being animal posits her as outside representation (1992, 70). It is a point made even more soundly by her parentage: “I don’t know who he [her father] is. It’s in my name: Sarrasri—Sarrah’s daughter. Only bastards are named for their mothers” (113). Daine’s narrative is doubly preoccupied with this notion illegitimacy: she is outside of signification because she is able to shape-shift (become animal) and because, as a bastard, she lacks a father’s name. This kind of illegitimacy is another kind of exclusion, another silencing. In her home village of Snowsdale in Galla (a country north of Tortall), Daine lacks a proper place within society—because of her magic and her lack of a father—yet in Tortall, the capital of the country Tortall, it does not matter. She is valued for herself.

In many respects, this complicating of discourse is a process of undoing that begins with an unpicking of magic, one of the components of fantasy that I established in Chapter Two. It is about the difference between the “Gift”—the all-purpose magical ability that is trained within institutions—and “wild magic”—a sort of elemental magic that bonds those who have it to particular things or, as is the case with Daine, animals. As I have noted, Daine suggests, “I can’t even start fire, and Gifted *babies* manage that” (1992, 15). Having the Gift is bound up in particular expectations, starting fire, in this case. From the very beginning, Daine’s ability refuses the Gift’s expectations. So much so, that it appears to be—and is perceived as—nothing more than a knack, “I just do. I’ve—” ‘A knack with animals,’ Onua chorused along with her” (45). In this way, Daine’s magic, that is not the Gift, expands the boundaries of that which is classed as magic within this world, and it does so from the position of Other.

'If I've learned anything as king, it's been I never know when someone will be able to help me. I have a feeling you'll be most welcome in this realm, Veralidaine Sarrasri.' (69)

The whole purpose of Daine's quartet is a kind of making normal: through including Daine with the realm of Tortall, through giving a name to the magic that she possesses as well as through a kind of animal speech that appeals to an existence outside of narration. In other words, through self-consciously questioning—for example, the names of things, what names mean and if names have any impact on power—the text speaks from a certain kind of silence.

Miri, a friend of Daine's, points out that having or not having magic "depends on what you mean [...] the sea's full of magic, but we can't use it like the Gift. It isn't the same" (96). While the two are not the same, they are united under this notion of magic. Daine might not have the Gift, but she has something. It is a point that Cloud's "horse sense" ([1994] 1999, 107) demonstrates quite well. Having just been told she possesses wild magic, after a lifetime of being tested—by her mother, a hedgewitch—for signs of the Gift, Daine asks Cloud, "You ever hear of 'wild magic'? They say I have it" (1992, 69). Cloud responds: "You have something, and you know it. Who cares what name it has? Or did you really think the wild creatures visit because they like humans?" (69). Here, Cloud offers a kind of practicality that is in opposition to Daine's worry over the name of this wild magic, and it is a practicality that speaks to something outside of language; it defies the "naming" that is always associated with institutions and the legitimate, as such it also relates to that moment of writing that initiated Alanna's cross-dressing. While this is not quite Alanna's engagement of the Symbolic, the negotiations of Daine's wild magic encompass similar issues: the legitimacy and power of the names of things.

Walsh (2013) suggests, "the 'Wild' then is both the locus of ultimate knowledge, and indefinite, interminable and unfathomable" (71). Yet, the wild is also, she suggests, "written as not *needing* to be interpreted because its meaning is transparent and immediate" (71, emphasis original). It is a reading that speaks to my earlier discussion of both realistic YAL and to woman's alignment with the body; Daine's wild magic aligns with all these readings. Her wild magic

is both unknown and already known, as “it’s in everything,” according to Numair (1992, 246). Yet, many within the world dismiss it—the Carthakis, as I have mentioned, “think it old wives’ tales” (272). It is perceived as both wild, “thus the name” and uncontrollable, “unpredictable” (207). Furthermore, Daine “can’t help animals knowing her feelings any more than she can help breathing. [Numair has] tested her control. It’s as good as she can make it” (207). Moreover, Daine, according to Numair, “has real power. Not the Gift, though [...] It’s wild magic, pure and simple. She’s brimming with it. I’ve never seen a human with so much” (65). Daine’s magic is constituted not only as power, which can also be read as natural, but it is also “real power,” further suggesting both a difference from the Gift—in that, this wild magic is potentially more “real” or natural—while also appealing to the obviousness of it. In this way, Daine’s magic is perceived as both Walsh’s “indefinite, interminable and unfathomable” as well as—and at the same time—simple, natural and thus obvious.

Chappell (2007) suggests that the animal—the particular manifestation of Daine’s “wild magic,” in that, she is “of the People”—is in many Lacanian readings conceptualised as the Real, what Chappell further describes as the “sensory world,” world of the fleshy body, “and thus the realm of unmediated and unordered material experience” (190). In being a human (girl) and *also* “of the People,” Daine is a liminal figure between human (figured as the Symbolic) and animal (figured as the Real). Thus, her shape-shifting could be read as a return to this world, an escape from the world of signification, a point that Bruce Clark (1998) and Waller (2009) also make. Moreover, Waller goes as far as stating, “metamorphosis is figured [in Psychoanalytic theory] as a return to a world of non-signification” (47). Thus, Daine—as both woman (body) and “People” (animal)—doubly exists within this “non-signification,” especially as these texts seem to posit the human form as merely one particular kind of animal.¹¹⁵ She is excluded from discourse, which is a form of the legitimate.

¹¹⁵ See my above reading of Aelin, the heroine of Maas’s *Throne of Glass* series. (2012–2015).

Moreover, Waller also suggests metamorphosis that does not see a return to a human state—as is the case with *Lady: My Life as a Bitch* (Burgess 2001) in which Sandra is transformed into a dog and remains forever dog—“functions as an endless liminal state where norms are upended and then not returned to” (49). While Daine always returns to her “true-shape,” thus never remaining wholly shape-shifted, as I discussed in Chapter Three, she is always already liminal. She is always already “of the People,” even when not wearing an (conventionally-perceived-as) animal form. In this way shape-shifting—and this is one of the reasons I refer to it as shape-shifting and not metamorphosis—potentially grants access to this space of non-signification, but it does not stay there; it bridges the space between the two. In this way Daine’s shape-shifting is also about bringing the Other into discourse.

For Daine, shape-shifting is not quite a return to non-signification. Throughout the Immortals quartet, Daine’s communication with the animals is rendered in language, despite an absence of speech marks. With Cloud and other mortal animals, there are no speech marks surrounding the animal’s dialogue, though when Daine speaks aloud to them, her speaking receives speech marks.

Strong teeth gripped her elbow hard, Daine looked around into the bright eyes of her pony, Cloud. If I have to bite you to stop you feeling sorry for yourself, I will, the mare informed her. You are being silly.

Numair, used to these silent exchanges, asked, “What does she say?”

‘She says I’m feeling sorry for myself. I don’t think she understands.’
([1994] 1999, 3–4)

While this is again an example of Cloud’s “horse sense” ([1994] 1999, 107), it also demonstrates how Daine’s “mind speech” with animals is rendered in narration: there are no speech marks. This speaking employs a refusal of the linguistic marker of speech (speech marks), but it is still the narration of speech. In other words, it is a liminal speaking: this “mind speech” is at once outside of hegemonic discourse (which requires speech marks, the symbol indicating speech) and, yet, within a discourse (the narrative of the text). It both is, and is not, speaking. Moreover, the text is particularly concerned with establishing the

normalcy, or at least regularity, of such “mind speech;” Numair is “*used to these silent exchanges,*” and so should be the reader, by extension (my emphasis). In this way, the narration offers an expanded sense of “speaking.” Not only does Daine’s wild magic, and thus her shape-shifting, grant her access to an additional language, a language that in conventional terms ought not exist for its alignment with “non-signification” (Waller 2009, 47), but it is rendered as speech within the text, crucially without the linguistic marker of speech. This is, in other words, one more way in which these texts are preoccupied with making visible that which is invisible and with speaking that which is unspeakable.

Wolf-Speaker (1994), book two of Pierce’s Immortals quartet, clearly demonstrates this speaking the unspeakable as well as the mutual cooperation it engenders. In this text, Daine is called to the aid of the Long Lake Pack of wolves. Led by Brokefang and his mate Frostfur, these wolves helped Daine take revenge on the bandits who burned her home, killing her mother and grandfather. Forced from Snowsdale in Galla for their part in helping Daine, as well as because of the lack of game, the wolves now occupy the Long Lake valley area that surrounds Fief Dunlath. This place is posited as “just about perfect,” not just for the wolves or “the People, but two leggers” ([1994] 1999, 199) and “Maybe even immortals, too” (200). As Brokefang describes,

This valley is so big we could go for days without seeing humans. There is plenty of game, no rival pack to claim it, and caves in the mountains for dens in the snows. (13)

The problem: Yolan of Dunlath is wrecking the land in a bid to take over the Tortallan Crown. With the aid of Tristan Staghorn and Gissa of Rachne (Carthaki mages), his plan is to destroy the land with “bloodrain,” a highly toxic magic brew that will “kill anything that uses moisture from the river” for a span of “ten miles” (240). Acting through Brokefang, Old White—the Wolf god—brings Daine to the Longlake region in order to “*set this whole valley to rights*” (201,

italics original),¹¹⁶ and it is Daine that must do so, because of her particular liminality: “*Fish, Fowl, four-leggers, two-leggers, no-leggers, [Daine is] to set this valley to rights*” by “*shap[ing] a bridge between kindreds*” (ibid.). Daine is the “only one for the task” (201) because she “*alone speak[s] to all three kindreds: human, immortals and beasts*” (199). From the liminal position of human-animal (being “of the People”) Daine is link between them all. In this way, these narrations of Daine’s magic are about overcoming the assumption that the animal (woman, child, adolescent—anyone/thing not the positive, that is, white human male—of hegemonic binary oppositions) is somehow lesser. Moreover, it is the inclusion of wild magic—including the speech between species that this magic makes possible—within discourse that, in offering multiple perspectives, questions the names of things, that is to say, the truth of things.

There is a certain kind of naming that is always associated with institutions and the legitimate (the Symbolic), and the defining of things as legitimate (the Gift) or illegitimate (wild magic, raka magic) as a part of this naming is questionable, as it is the source of so many exclusions. Yet, these narrations show both Diane and the raka (in Chapter Two) using their Othered magic to great success: “raka magic was shaped by subtlety, crafted by mages who spent their lives hiding things from other mages ([2004] 2005, 74). In this way, this section relates to the moment of writing that initiated Alanna’s cross-dressing, while also speaking to issues regarding access to the Symbolic. In other words Daine’s magic is constituted, within Pierce’s Immortal quartet, not only as power—something that can be read as natural—but it is also “real” power, suggesting a difference from the Gift, the sanctioned and institutionalised magic of this world. In that, this wild magic is potentially more “real” or natural, and in being included within narration, this Other is made available in discourse, thus engaging those silences. Consequently, this section not only demonstrates how Pierce’s Tortall universe is concerned with questioning the authority (truth) of hegemonic discourse, more widely than just

¹¹⁶ While conversations with immortals are given speech marks—because immortal animals can both mind-speak with Daine and speak in the human sense—such conversations are also denoted by italics, to indicate the divine nature of the speaking.

in terms of gender, while also making that which is unspeakable (the animal, the Real) available in narration (a kind of discourse). Pivotaly, these texts do this through the figure of Daine, a liminal persona between the poles—human/animal, Gift/wild magic—of opposition.

UN-HORROR-ING THE BLOOD: THE BODY IN LANGUAGE

Alanna's unique position makes a telling of the bleeding of menarche—provided by an older woman, who is also a healer—imperative. This telling gives the bleeding—this physical, female thing—meaning within discourse, within language, that is to say, the Symbolic. Yet it is not just for Alanna, the girl operating with a masculine subjectivity, for whom such a telling is imperative. While Alanna's disguise and its (temporary) exclusion from the feminine makes it particularly important, Kel—who is also training to become a knight, though not disguised as a boy—also offers a telling of the bleeding, one that extends to the conversations around menarche and menstruation that girls, like Lucy Powrie, are asking for both inside, and out, of YAL. For Alanna, Kel and also Maerad (the shero of Croggon's *The Books of Pellinor*), the telling provides signification, and in doing so, "the horror of the blood," as Irigaray terms it, is neutralised ([1974] 1985, 228). This neutralisation is essential because, as Hyde suggests, the first questioning of discourse (law or hegemony) must start with the body, for the body is the site upon which discourse, or power in Foucault's terms, manifest.

Irigaray ([1974] 1985) takes up the red blood as a metaphor for the mother and maternal lineage, for a reading of relationships outside of the law of the father, or the white blood, or sperm (see, 116 and 221–222). Battersby (1998) argues that Irigaray's reading of the bond between Antigone and her brother, "opens up a division between '*sang rouge*' (red blood, which is linked to matrilineal descent) and '*sang blanc*' (white blood/anemic blood, which links with sperm and patrilineality)" (113). *Sang blanc* is the order of Western philosophy, of subjectivity. As females are excluded from the Lacanian Symbolic, they not only lack access to (masculine) discourse, but they also lack "access to the signifying economy" of their femaleness, as Irigaray ([1974]

1985) terms it (71). As all subjectivity is masculine, there is no space for a subjectivity that includes 'red blood' and birth. It is this positioning that gives rise to "the horror of the blood" (228). Furthermore, the horror is merely reiterated unless rearticulation of the body occurs, unless discourse is transformed.

The telling of Alanna's bleeding not only situates the body *within* language (the Symbolic), but it also makes it known *through* that language, while also facilitating Alanna's transition from child to woman. Importantly, this telling comes through a conversation between Alanna and an older woman, Mistress Cooper.

'You poor child,' she chuckled. 'Did no one ever tell you of a woman's monthly cycle? The fertility cycle?'

Alanna stared. Maude had mentioned something, once—

'That's what this is? It's *normal*!'

The woman nodded. 'It happens to us all. We can't bear children until it begins.'

'How long do I have to put up with this?' Alanna gritted.

'Until you are too old to be bear children. It's as normal as the full moon is, and it happens just as often. You may as well get used to it. (136–137, emphasis original)

Alanna is a "poor child" because of the absence of this telling, though as the narration makes clear, Alanna had heard something "once" regarding "the woman's monthly cycle." Here, the difference lies in how she has now experienced this bleeding for herself thus calling for a more practical need for the conversation. Thus, someone must tell the child about this "woman's monthly cycle" (1983, 136) for until told, the child does not know the body. The bleeding has given new meaning to that which "Maude had mentioned," and in this way, the narration makes explicit the link between the bleeding (the physical, bodily occurrence) and the telling of it (the discursive production).

In other words, there is a difference between the bleeding (as a physical occurrence) and the *meaning* of it. The meaning is that which Alanna lacks

access to, as the child and as Alan. “Tell you of the woman’s monthly cycle” serves as both the naming of this thing, this physical occurrence, as well as its making normal (136). Without the telling, Alanna does not understand the bleeding. Thus, prior to this telling the bleeding at once exists and yet does not, and it is the telling that allows, makes possible, the transition into knowledge: ““That’s what this is? It’s *normal*?”” (136, emphasis original). Crucially, in this making normal, the telling links this “woman’s monthly cycle” (what Alanna refers to as “it”) to the “full moon,” not only is this an instance of relationality (“woman’s cycle”), but it is also repetition. Moreover, the making normal depends on a link to nature; there is a suggestion that both these things are natural, and thus normal, because they occur in nature.¹¹⁷ This fully takes advantage of the space opened through my reading of Daine’s magic and shape-shifting in the previous section.

However, as Alanna is cross-dressed and as she has taken on the subject position of Alan, this telling is complicated: “again Mistress Cooper raised her eyebrows, ‘you’re female, child, no matter what clothing you wear. You must become accustomed to that’” (136). This is about the “obviousness” of the body, as discussed in relation to Alanna’s own cross-dressing, Daine’s shape-shifting and Cinder’s cybernetic state in Chapter Three and, in this chapter, in relation to the “real,” which is both outside of language and impossible to represent and also not in need of representation because of its obviousness. The “you’re female” is this bodily obviousness. Yet, the language of clothes (a discourse) has worked to obscure that obviousness, while also questioning how obvious or “real” (as in natural) it actually is. Despite the heightened physicality of the

¹¹⁷ As a point of expansion—and of defining “in nature,” which I do not here have space to cover—a passage from *Fire* (Cashore 2009).

‘There is nothing unnatural in this world,’ he said. ‘An unnatural thing is a thing that could never happen in nature. I happened. I am natural, and the things I want are natural. The power of your mind, and your beauty, even when you’ve been drugged in the bottom of a boat for two weeks, covered in grime and your face purple and green—your unnatural beauty is natural. Nature is horrifying. (318)

This musing on nature, and on what is natural, speaks to this chapter’s concern, from the point of view of another mythopoeic YA fantasy text.

femaleness through this “bleeding”—despite the body’s insistence upon its own obviousness—“clothing” has worked to obscure it. This is why discourse is so important; discourse has the power to change our perceptions of things, and while our perceptions of things cannot offer absolute truth, they do shape our world.

This worrying of the body’s obviousness is furthered with the instruction that Alanna “must become accustomed” to being female, in that not only does “become accustomed” set up the chance of not becoming accustomed, but it also sets the “female” up as depending on this “tell[ing].” The stability of the “female” is dependent on the thing it creates; each side of the various oppositional pairs (bleeding/tell[ing], woman/child, I/us all, female/male) requires the other, and through narration, each becomes that other; thus transition from “child” to “woman” exists as a continuum of change, at once requiring the stable oppositions, while at the same time collapsing their opposition. In other words, the apparent obviousness of the body is obscured, and it is the “tell[ing]” that allows the disguised body to be known: the “tell[ing]” constructs the “female.” For Alanna, then, the body is at once known and unknown, and knowing depends on telling (“explained”).

However, while “female” (the physical body) does not change, at least for this “you,” it is the “female” that allows change to occur—that allows this “clothing” to be worn. Without the being “female,” the telling (in all its forms) would not be. This is why the fleshy, physical body (that bleeds) is also crucial; the body influences the discourses of it; without the body there would be nothing to have perceptions of, and while the body does not in a straight forward and one-to-one way dictate the shape of its discursive construction, it must still be taken into account. For this reason, a conversation is just as integral to Kel’s transition into womanhood—““You’ve become a woman. It’s the Goddess’s mark on us, that we bleed every month” (2000, 98)—as it is for Alanna. While Alanna’s conversation was required because of her particular masculine subjectivity, the text insists that Kel, even as a girl (in that she appears girl through her clothing), requires the conversation. First, in the “remember[ing] of several talks she’d had with her mother” and second with the conversation that occurs alongside the first bleeding.

Lalasa opened the dressing room door. Looking at Kel, she saw the problem immediately. 'Do you know what this means?' she asked opening a dry-goods chest and drawing out linen and a fresh loincloth.

Kel nodded, still scrubbing.

'Congratulations,' Lalasa said. You started early, didn't you? Not even twelve. I was thirteen [...] Have you cramps?"

'An ache, like.' Lalasa patted her abdomen.

Kel nodded.

'Willow tea will help. Here.' She showed Kel how to fix a linen pad inside her loincloth, to catch the blood. 'We can change that at lunchtime.'
(2000, 98)

Kel, thanks to her mother, already knows what this bleeding is, as the "nodded" suggests and as I discussed above. Yet, as this is the first bleeding, a conversation still occurs, a conversation that insists on the practical: scrubbing hose, resolving cramps and how to use the linen pad.

This conversation is, again, about making the bleeding normal. While there is a temptation to read Kel's first bleeding in opposition to Alanna's and as the more "normal" menarche—in that most girls have not become, through cross-dressing, boys—the text refuses that distinction. Despite knowing what this bleeding is, the above conversation between Lalasa and Kel is prefaced, in narration, by "She had a dull ache in her abdomen. Was that normal?" (2000, 97), contrasted with Alanna's earlier exclamation of "'That's what this is? It's *normal*,'" and this use of "normal" in both situations suggests that these texts are very much concerned with a making normal of this bleeding. Critically, it is a making normal through language—through narrations of conversations, which are, in fact, a double layering of language: the narration itself and the conversation, shared between two women, to which that narration appeals.

Moreover, this making normal does not just end at the conversation surrounding menarche. Rather, the text also writes it into the girl's everyday existence.

As Kel washed her face, cleaned her teeth, and combed her hair, Lalasa put out her clothes, including a fresh breastband and loincloth, and one of the cloth pads Kel wore during her monthly bleeding. It had begun the day before. (2001, 39)

The repetition of the stories within Pierce's work, alongside the inclusion of menstruation into the girl's daily life, as Kel's handmaiden indicates, speaks to a wider concern with speaking the unspeakable that is appearing in popular and media culture. Reaching a particular apex in the summer of 2015, there has been a particular emphasis on the lack of narrations and speaking about menstruation (see, for example, O'Neil 2015; see, also, Rojas 2015 and tyrannosauruslexx 2015), as I discussed above in relation to Powrie's vlog on the topic (2015).

Finally, *The Gift* (Croggon 2002) is an excellent example of this speaking from the mythopoeic point of view and outside of Pierce's work, demonstrating that this speaking is occurring, though still in a limited fashion. Maerad, having been raised a slave after the sack of her home, does not know (like Alanna) the meaning of the menstrual blood, and, again, there is a conversation between Maerad, the-girl-becoming-woman and Silva, an older woman, in order to explain the bleeding, and, in this instance, the "agonizing cramps" that accompany it (100). Where Kel's narration introduced a "dull ache" in the abdomen, Maerad's offers a similar, but also different, accompanying trait. In this way, these texts also demonstrate that while menstruation generally affects most women, the individual experience may differ. Finally, Silva also gets to the heart of this chapter, by suggesting "it is dreadful that any girl should be kept in such ignorance of her own body. But still, you have no mother" ([2002] 2004, 102). This ignorance of the body is what is at stake, without a discourse of bodily instability—including menarche—adolescent girls are trapped within a body that has limited meaning. This is why the body (fleshy, physical) and the discourses of it are so important: understanding takes both.

These narrations of menstruation, and narrations—throughout mythopoeic YA fantasy—like them, are that rearticulation. They are the bringing of blood, of red blood, into discourse, into language. Furthermore, in being so preoccupied with constructing the bleeding of menstruation as

“normal,” these texts insist upon its signification, and in doing so they open spaces in which not only might Battersby’s project of conceiving of the female self as not one but always potentially two might logically occur but also relationships between mothers and daughters as well as sexual relationships between individuals. In other words, relationships are key, and it is these concomitant issues—as their articulations are made possible through this rearticulation of bleeding—that I address in Conclusions. Here, I want to conclude this chapter with a brief look at the uniquely gendered persona Alan/Alanna develops, as I feel this being Alan(na) is made possible by the very speaking of the unspeakable with which I have been concerned.

ALANNA/ALAN BECOMES ALAN(NA)

Owing to Alanna’s cross-dressing, the text appears to insist that the self is the body seen: Alanna is Alan because she appears to be (and performs) Alan, as I have discussed. Yet, because this is an instance of cross-dressing, the text also questions the very visibility that it has established as essential. Alanna is not Alan nor is she simply Alanna. She is a unique combination of both, and it is through her gendered performances—that are always in tension with her physical, fleshy body—that this combination is, through narration, made available. In one sense, it is about how, as Flanagan (2008) suggests

female cross-dressing texts emphasize the fallibility of visual cues, particularly as they relate to the assessment of gender. They achieve this through the endless portrayal of characters that are not conventionally masculine or feminine, and by ultimately suggesting that it is not all-important to be considered as such. (128–129)

The “fallibility of visual cues” and the “ultimately suggesting that it is not all-important” to be considered “conventionally masculine or feminine” is a reading that Alanna’s text makes explicit. In a narration of squeamishness over a large spider that drops onto her head, Alanna is narrated as reflexively musing upon how “her fellow squires [...] would laugh if they knew she feared spiders. They’d say she was behaving like a girl, not knowing she *was* a girl” (1984, 5). The squires are narrated as not only associating a fear of spiders with girls but

also of not knowing that Alanna is, in fact, a girl. Not only is a difference established between *behaving* (surface) like a girl and *being* (depth) a girl (thus establishing an opposition between gender and sex), but the squires—save Alanna—are also aligned with only knowing the behaviour.

During Alanna's cross-dressing it is the surface (gender) that is made available for determining identity and that surface assumes a sex. Alanna, however, problematises this assumption by being, despite the clothes she wears, female—and sometimes, even, what is described as—feminine.

'And the Duke wears a red-gold brocade dressing-gown. Can you imagine?' she [Alanna] asked.'

Coram chuckled. 'It's things like that that remind me who ye are. Sometimes even I forget ye're not a lad.' (1984, 145)

Commenting on the Duke's dressing-gown is coded as, if not feminine, at least not being "a lad," and it reminds not only Coram but also the reader that Alanna is not quite one or the other. In many ways, this is Marjorie Garber's (2009) point about how "the transvestite marks the entrance into the symbolic" (36). While Alanna is not the transvestite as her cross-dressing generally follows Garber's cross-dressing for success patterning, her cross-dressing still marks an entrance into the Symbolic as it demonstrates her body to be a construct, a sign upon which other signs may be superimposed.

Garber argues that the cross-dressing figure "inhabits, indeed incarnates, the margin" (17). In this way, the cross-dresser is a liminal figure, and, as such, s/he, through problematising of gender difference "indicates a category crisis [...] an irresolvable conflict or epistemological crux that destabilises comfortable binaries," as Garber further suggests (17). For this reason, it is important that Alanna is narrated as being aware, through her position between the binary, of both the surface and the depth. She notes,

In the three years she had been disguised as a boy, she had learned that boys know girls as little as girls know boys. It didn't make sense—*people are people, after all, she thought*—but that was how things were. (5, emphasis original)

Not only is Alanna granted access—owing to her cross-dressing—to

traditionally masculine spaces, but she is also granted access to a position of knowledge unavailable to *either* side of the binary. In this way, she becomes what Garber argues is the “third,” or “a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility. Three puts in question the idea of one: of identity, self-sufficiency, self-knowledge” (1992, 11). Three places one (the individual) into question because in Western society one is always defined in opposition to the Other, a third disrupts that opposition. Alanna, as Alan, disrupts that opposition, as the text metaphorically demonstrates this position through clothing.

In *Lioness Rampant* (1988), Alanna is nearing the end of her hero’s journey. She has ventured forth and conquered demons and has even returned home, to Tortall, with a boon, the “Dominion Jewel” to present to Jonathan (just before his coronation). Owing to her long absence and to Jon’s impending coronation, Alanna is to be (re)presented at court. The seamstresses hired to dress Alanna for the occasion believe that she must appear as a lady, despite being a knight: “‘Ye can’t show your legs to the whole court and his Majesty that’s to be’” (213). The seamstress’s position represents the hegemonic discourse of this space. However, as Alanna declares, ‘I’m not a lady—I’m a knight [...] and I’m making my bow to court as one. Dresses are fine sometimes, but not tonight’ (214). The seamstress speaks from the side of propriety, the sumptuary rules that dictated women’s dress at court at this time. She speaks from the hegemonic. However, Alanna—who has rightfully earned her shield (and who has proved that earning over and over)—is not, strictly, a lady. Thayet—the exiled princess of Sarain and stunningly beautiful—suggests an alternative.

It was a shirt and tunic, with soft, full breeches instead of hose. The tunic was longer than usual, coming to the knee, yet splits in the sides to the waist ensured the wearer’s freedom of movement. (214)

Thus the shirt and tunic that are suggested as a mediating option between the two poles of masculine dress (breeches and hose for men and gowns for ladies) come to represent Alanna’s subject position—between the poles of opposition—at the series conclusion, at the end of her journey, as it were.

While Hyde ([1998] 2010) suggests that “the first stuttering questioning of those orders [of hegemony, of discourse] must always begin by breaking the seal and speaking about the body” (172), I began concluding this chapter with the most pivotal speaking of the body: the speaking of menstruation, the including—within discourse—“the bleeding of women” (Croggon [2002] 2004, 102). I did so because, in this case, speaking required all that came before: Alanna’s cross-dressing, while also of the body, offers the possibility of signification through the acquiring of a masculine subjectivity. Thus, while it works for a time to empower her and to offer agency, it is not until Alanna fully accepts her status as both “woman and warrior” that she is able to take on a subjectivity that is uniquely hers. Daine’s existence as both human and animal explores, through her liminal position, how the binary opposition human/animals conceives the animal (and also woman) as aligned with “non-signification” (Waller 2009, 47). Daine unravels that assumption. Within this world, animals are not “non-signification.” It is, rather, that humans cannot understand them (and vice versa). There is a difference in signification, not an absence. Daine, as both human and animal (perhaps human-animal), bridges the gap between the oppositions, speaking from a silenced position. From this unlocked potential of discourse, woman, “can sing a shapely cosmos if” she, not just “he, wants to” (Hyde [1998] 2008, 218). From this position, woman can speak, engaging the power of discourse.

CONCLUSIONS

ALTERNATIVE WAYS THROUGH EMBODIED SUBJECTIVITIES

Through the texts of Tamora Pierce and Marissa Meyer, this thesis has argued that mythopoeic YA fantasy contests the dominant, hegemonic framework of adolescence, as well as the concomitant image of being an adolescent female girl in popular and media culture, issues that Chapter One and Two specifically established and engaged. It has argued that the liminality of adolescence (in general) and of the adolescent girl (in particular) is destabilising to the structure of binary oppositions dominating this space, to such an extent that the adolescent's very "in-betweenness" renders her "structurally [...] 'invisible,'" that is, outside of—and unaccounted for within—binary structures (Turner's [1967] 1979, 235). Owing to this, the hegemonic map of adolescence is linear and flat, and it refuses the adolescent girl, who is perceived to be a shape-shifting, non-linear, and embodied creature in ways that her male counterparts are not. As established in Chapter Two, maps, and a notion of (re)mapping, has been central throughout: through a focus on the body, this thesis is fundamentally a re-mapping of female adolescence through the images (Chapter Three) and narratives (Chapter Four) available in mythopoeic YA fantasy. Specifically, I have been concerned with how mythopoeic YA fantasy offers an alternative Imaginary—a language of female adolescence, of being an adolescent female body—that challenges the dominant hegemonic Imaginary of popular and media culture.

In order to draw together the key threads of this thesis, this conclusion focuses on images of relation, as relation frustrates the economy of opposition, and its attendant insistence on linear development, that dominates Western discourses of adolescence. Relation refuses binary structures and contesting binaries is the very core of this thesis. Thus, this focus offers a twofold opportunity. First, a relational model of self—made possible through repetition and connection—engages each of this thesis's key issues: the body's liminality, as evidenced by the case studies in Chapter Three and the subject position Alan(na) adopts at the end of her hero journey in Chapter Four; the importance

of scars, not just as markers of a body's history but as also refusing the flatness of hegemonic discourse's ideal appearance; the multiplicity of self that becomes possible when the body is conceived as liminal; while also engaging the space between opposing sides of binary pairs (mind/body, human/animal, man/woman, appearance/self).

Second, it offers a new model of being adolescent, a model made possible by the alternative images of living and being an adolescent girl that are available in mythopoeic YA fantasy. Through an economy of repetition, this relational model of self frustrates opposition; the very nature of repetition refuses opposition, as it requires an affiliation between occurrences. Narrations of connection develop this relation, especially through images of touch, as touch insists upon a connection between the toucher and the touched, while also accounting for raised and irregular surfaces. Finally both repetition and connection serve as a map of how a self might be conceived in relation to, and as interdependent with, other selves—while also always demonstrating how relationality can produce the uniqueness so central to hegemonic narratives of self, only without the exclusionary practices of that discourse. Thus, it is to this model of relation that I now turn, through first a focus on two kinds relation—repetition and connection—that are available in Pierce's *Song of the Lioness* and *Immortals* quartets as well as Meyer's *Lunar Chronicles* before concluding with a metaphorical notion of "the Pack," as an example of this relational model of self.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ This reading of a relational model of self is underscored by a feminist ethics of care that is outside the scope of this thesis. Still, Gilligan (1979), (1982), (1986), (1987), and (1990); Kittay and Feder (2003), Kittay, Jennings and Wasunna (2005), Kittay (2011) are integral within this field. Gilligan's work, in particular, helped to establish the field, and throughout her long career, adolescence has been of concern. Within Battersby (1998), there is a strong engagement, within her overall project of a feminist metaphysics of identity, with a feminist ethics of care, and also, more recently, Holdsworth and Lury (forthcoming, 2016) look at the possibilities for an ethics of care in relation to children's television, of specific relevance in its concern with how practices of caring are made available in children's programming, a focus similar to my concern with how mythopoeic YA fantasy makes such available to adolescents.

COUNTERING LINEARITY: REPETITION

“She will be her mother and yet not her mother, nor her daughter as mother,
with no closure of the circle or the spiral of identity.”
(Irigaray [1974] 1985, 76)

Within these mythopoeic YA fantasy texts, repetition occurs in a number of ways, but I am here interested with a particular iteration of repetition, specifically repetitions that are related to menstruation’s role in transforming a female-child into a woman and the bearing of children it makes possible. I am interested in these repetitions because in developmental theories of adolescence cyclicity is what makes the girl unsuitable for hegemonic models of development, because cyclicity is posited as the antithesis to linear development. It is where, in Waller’s (2009) reading, the adolescent girl “slips back into [...] ‘woman’s time’” (35), and in my larger concern, it is where one of the most profound silences occurs: we do not talk about that which makes us uncomfortable, and in not talking about, for example, menstruation, isolation and exclusion occur.

In Chapter Four, this was particularly evident in the narration of Alanna’s menarche. Disguised as a boy whilst training to become a knight—and, crucially, without a mother—menarche, for Alanna, is a horrifying occurrence, because she is both alone in its occurrence *and* unknowing of its meaning; as I demonstrated, it is this combination of isolation and ignorance that contrived to produce the horror of the blood. While in Chapter Four, I discussed how the conversation shared between Mistress Cooper and Alanna aided in making the bleeding “normal” (“That’s what this is? It’s normal?”), I want to here focus on the repetition offered by, and within, that conversation: the one implied by cycle (“woman’s monthly cycle”), the one offered by Maude’s having “mentioned something, once” (the telling a repetition of that original mentioning), the repetition in how “it happens to us all” as well as in that it repeats the pattern of the “full moon,” and the connection to “bearing children” (1983, 136–137).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ The passage concerning the “telling” of this bleeding is given in full on 214 of this thesis.

Significantly, this bleeding is constructed in terms of plurality. Not only does the conversation itself insist upon a notion of community (at least two beings are required in order to converse), but it also reiterates the importance of relation through insisting that this bleeding happens to “us all,” the women of the “women’s monthly cycle.” This is not to say that all women experience this bleeding in the same way; it is, rather, that this blood, the physical material thing, offers connection, if discursive constructions will only take it up. Typically, they do not, as Alan illustrates. Faced with this bodily function—this aspect of being-female—Alan cannot apprehend the meaning of the bleeding. Alan is the ideal of hegemonic models of self: the individual, the hero. Yet, for him, the bleeding has no meaning. Thus, in order for Alanna to come into her full-self, to become Alan(na), menstruation has to be acknowledged. The being-female—and being so with another woman—has to be acknowledged.

Moreover, this monthly cycle—itself a repetition—has the potential to produce (other) children, at least until it ends. In relating the “it” to “bear[ing] children,” narration not only relates the cycle to something outside of itself—another kind of making normal through linking—but it also produces a repetition that problematises the linearity of dominant conceptions of development. In other words, Alanna is narrated as being a “child,” though one transitioning into “womanhood,” and this cycle constructs her as now being able to bear other children, to perpetuate the cycle and to produce multiplicity of self. This perpetuation of the “child” through the “bear[ing]” of other “children” constructs the cycle as at once ending and never ending. While Alanna may one day be “too old,” the narration of the cycle—in terms of “tell,” of story—constructs that cycle as never ceasing. In so doing, the narration offers cycles (repeats monthly) within cycles (the bearing of children), modelling a kind of spiral of identity in the process. This is about, as Irigaray ([1974] 1985) suggests, “frustrate[ing] the opposition through the economy of repetition” (77). Repetition is not linear, which problematises traditional developmental models that are based on linear development through time, and it speaks to a kind of interdependency that contributes to the relational model of existence with which I am concerned. Repetition refuses autonomy, since without links between occurrences there would be no repetition.

Alanna and Thom, as twins, offer a heightened example of repetition. Hunt (1986) suggests that twins offer unique possibilities for identity formation through the mechanism of “identity exchange” (109). One way this kind of exchange may occur is through the notion of a “counterpart,” and of this Hunt suggests

here we may point out that the idea of counterparts calls up not only facile masquerades but deeper ambiguities—for example, the notion that both counterparts really have their existence within a single individual. In this essentially Jungian interpretation, the counterparts become the self and the shadow. (112)

As I have demonstrated, this is the relationship between the twins Alanna and Thom. From the outset, they are constructed as not merely two distinct parts of one whole but as a whole in two parts. After the cross-dressing, Alanna “looks enough like Thom to fool anyone but Coram” (1983, 9) and she—not Thom—possesses the skills coded as masculine within this world: “quicker [...] rarely tired [...] [and has] a feel for the fighting arts” (15). While I discussed above how this allows Alanna to not only construct her “own gender niche” (Flanagan 2008, 104) and to serve as a “third” (Garber 1992, 11), it also posits her self in relation to, or in dialogue with, Thom’s. They, in other words, complement one another, while in appearance, they repeat one another: despite being brother and sister, Alanna and Thom are identical, once Alanna cross-dresses.

Of this doubleness, McCallum (1999) notes, “a primary effect of the double is to destabilize notions of the subject as unified, or coherent, or as existing outside of a relation to an other” (75) (see, also, Hunt 1986 and Waller 2009). This is the aim of these Conclusions: to demonstrate how the self—that is multiple and fragmented—might exist in relation to other selves, in this case, through repetitions of, or related to, that body. However, as I have demonstrated, the goal of hegemonic YAL is to enact the unification of the fragmented self. Hegemonic YAL hails the adolescent outside of the text through the adolescent inside the text in order to assist the “real” adolescent in their journey towards a unique and individual self, foreclosing relationship or interdependency in the process. Thus, the double must be “resolved;” the liberal humanist ethic underscoring these texts requires resolution. McCallum

specifically notes that in “gothic novels closure is usually achieved through the death of the double” (76). On the surface, this would appear to be the case with Alanna and Thom, as Thom does die at the end of *The Song of the Lioness* quartet, concomitant to Alan(na) finally coming fully into her powers and her sense of self. However, these are mythopoeic YA fantasy texts, and as such, they complicate matters.

In this case, Alanna’s three children thwart any easy resolution of Alanna’s self as singular or individual—refigured as her eldest son (Thom), Alanna not only gives birth to her dead brother/other half (Thom), but she also gives birth to Alan, her cross-dressed self, refigured as a twin to her daughter Aly. Through having children, these “other” parts of Alanna’s identity are actualised. The multiple aspects of Alanna are offered through her children, another kind of repetition. Crucially, this offering of repetition through children focuses, in the *Daughter of the Lioness* duology, on Aly, crucial as Aly most closely replicates Alan(na)—the subject position of multiplicity that Alanna achieves at the end of her hero journey. This figuring gives even more weight to “the whole point to doing as I did [becoming a knight] was so you could do something else, if you wanted to” ([2003] 2005, 18) with which I opened this reading of mythopoeic YA fantasy. It is not just that Alanna opened the door for Aly to “do something else,” which she did; it is, rather, that Alanna made it possible for Aly not to be beholden to gendered expectations.

‘I could make myself up as a raka man, if that will appease you, my lady, Aly offered. I think it would be a waste of my time, but I live to serve in any small way that I can.’ (380)

Benefiting from the pluralities her mother made possible, Aly is a trickster. She is the liminal figure between oppositions, or as Hyde ([1998] 2008) suggests, “a boundary-crosser” (7). Aly can be whomever—man or woman, raka (black) or lurian (white)—she needs, or wishes, to be, and in this way, she is not beholden to a sexed, or even raced, body, a notion that a reading of Daine’s firstborn, a daughter, makes explicit.

Thus, where the narration of Alanna’s menstruation and the children it makes possible expands, through the embodied repetition of her children,

Alanna's sense of self, the narration concerning Daine's first child pushes the boundaries of this expanded sense of self even further, questioning both what it means to be gendered as well as what it means to be human.

Sarra [Daine's now goddess mother] walked over and reached into the hammock blanket, pulling out a wolf puppy. It turned instantly into a young giraffe, then a gosling. Whatever shape it took, Sarra held it firmly. 'Now see here, youngster,' she informed her grandchild [...] Enough. Choose a shape and a sex and stick to it, right now.' She listened for a moment, then shook her head. 'Five years at least. Learn the limits of one body. Then, if you're good, you may try others. Now *choose*.'

A moment later she held a human baby girl in her hands. ([2003] 2005, 246)

This choice—that the child gets to choose “shape and sex”—is provocative, while also offering an alternative to the illusions of choice offered to adolescent girls in popular and media culture. Importantly, this choice—and choosing “human baby girl”—does not limit the potentialities of self. Yes, the child chooses this shape and, presumably, “stick[s] to it,” but the possibility of “whatever shape” remains.

While I discussed the relationship between Daine and her unborn child in Chapter Three in terms of how Daine had to “change below the waist whenever the child” did in order to prevent it from “kick[ing] its way out of her womb” ([2003] 2005, 17), this pregnancy reiterates the relationship between mother and (unborn) child: “‘in the future, don’t shape-shift while you’re pregnant. It gives them the wrong idea’” ([2003] 2005, 246). Daine's daughter transforms so frequently *because*, the narration suggests, Daine shape-shifted whilst pregnant. The actions of the mother directly influence the child through the shapes the child adopts. The child repeats the shape-shifting her of her mother. I do not make this point in order to suggest the “rightness” or “wrongness” of Daine's shape-shifting whilst pregnant, I discuss it, rather, to illustrate the relationship between mother and child, a relationship dependent on the blood (of life) that hegemonic discourse refuses.

COUNTERING VISUALITY: CONNECTION

“She is beyond all pairs of opposites,
all distinctions between active and passive or past and future.”
(Irigaray [1974] 1985, 230)

The economy of opposition dominating hegemonic discourse relies on visuality—or the paradigmatic way in which the visual has become not only the dominant means of perceiving this world but of also being a self in it. As the Introduction established and Chapter Three contested, this is a problem this thesis has addressed. This visuality has led to a representational economy of self-through-appearance that produces not only a pervasive superficiality—you are who you appear to be—but it does so through furthering opposition itself: viewing may occur at a distance, leaving a space, a potential opposition, between the viewer and the viewed. Touch refuses this distance. Directly drawing on my reading of topographical maps in Chapter Two as well as the hologram in Chapter Three, this call for touch—as an additional means of perceiving the body—utilises Grosz’s (1998). Specifically, her argument that the touch’s “contiguous access to an abiding object; the surface of the toucher and the touched must partially coincide,” while also “grant[ing] the subject access to the texture” and also, potentially, “to the depth—of objects, depending on their composition” (1998, 98–99). In this way, touch offers more access to the contours of the body than does vision, and it does so through connections between individuals or between individuals and other things (be they animal or mechanical), a reading that Daine and Cinder’s relationships with animals and machines (respectively) narrates particularly well.

In Daine’s shape-shifting, touch is explicitly engaged in order to make the changed body available: “Daine explored with her hands [...] Her top and bottom incisors were long and extremely sharp, sharp enough to cut her skin ([1994] 1999, 177). Touch allows her to grasp, as it were, just how sharp her teeth are and it allows for the texture of her furred nose to be made known, to both her and to the reader. Within the narration, Daine discovers the body’s changed shape through this touch, but it is also through the narration of the touch that this change is conveyed to the reader. A narration of seeing the changes to Daine’s body would not offer the same kinds of details (textures,

changed contours) to which even a narrated touch can appeal. Yet, even here, there is a tension between touch (Daine's "explor[ing] with her hands") and sight, as Daine immediately asks her companions if they "can all see this?" (177), thus reiterating conventional reliance on the visual. Yet, while acknowledging that tension, the passage does offer touch as an alternative. After all, the narration only confirms that what was touched can be seen: "'Of course,' Maura replied scornfully" (178). The touch made the change known; the seeing merely confirmed it. Moreover, the touch grants access to the characteristics of these changes, characteristics that sight would only be able to approximate.

Furthermore, because of that tension between seeing and touching, this narration of touch does not aim to replace sight; it works to supplement sight, often through the garnering of additional information about, for example, a body. It is a powerful narrative of perceiving the changes to one's own body, but touch can also be employed in relation to other bodies: "Daine felt the dragon's hide ripple. It was like a convulsion—or a contraction! Ma's daughter realized" (1992, 262). Here, the touch not only grants knowledge, but it also begins to offer an access to depth, to the internal, while also foreshadowing a kind of touch that (much like a medical scan) makes the internal available. For this reason, I now turn to Cinder and how, through the iteration of a touch, the extent of Cinder's "cybernetic makeup" is made known (2012, 81). This development of touch, and this turn to the mechanical, is important for two reasons: first, in popular in media culture, adolescent girls are no longer strictly fleshy (as in animal) creatures; they are integrated with and reliant on technology—how often does an adolescent girl appear without a mobile phone in her hand?—and second, the re-envisioning of the medical scan, through this frame of touch, speaks back to the hologram as an alternative, to the flat and superficial image of popular and media culture.

Having been volunteered for "plague research" (2012, 66) by her legal guardian, Lingh Adri, Cinder's body undergoes, ostensibly, a medical scan; however, given her cyborg state, it involved "the click of prongs" (80) as an android connected to "the panel in the back of her head" (81) as opposed to the external scan typical of such imaging. This connection, or "plugging in" (195) is

a kind of touch. In fact, I consider it a development of the touch that I read in relation to Daine, one that is made specifically possible because of Cinder's cybernetic body (fleshy bodies do not have control panels or sockets). It is a development that grants not just access to the surface of the touched and toucher, but also to the internal: from this connection, Cinder's cybernetic makeup is made known—something as internal as the composition of her heart, “primarily silicon, mixed with bio tissue,” is made known (117). For both Daine and Cinder, the touch not only reveals multiplicity, but it also holds the internal in simultaneity with the external (Daine's shape-shifting occurs because of that internal being “of the People” (1992, 70)), and in so doing it becomes a powerful way of perceiving the body (and its changes).

Yet, prior to the scan's (forced) connection, Cinder uses this kind of connection to join with an android in need of repair, and the narration of that connection is quite telling in relation to the potential risk of this kind of touch.

The only way to determine what was wrong and if a reboot was necessary was to check the android's internal diagnostics, and that required plugging in. Cinder hated plugging in. Connecting her own wiring with a foreign object had always felt hazardous, like if she wasn't careful, her own software could be overridden. (2012, 195)

While lending a certain weight to the previous reading and, perhaps, also speaking to what Balsamo (1996) refers to as the invasiveness of medical imaging—“plugging in” reads as a euphemism for rape—this narration suggests a possibility, or at least fear, of losing the self through this kind of touch, and it is an uneasiness that Daine's narration also discusses, though in a slightly different way. The early manifestations of Daine's “wild magic” (114)—prior to her even knowing she has magic—result in a loss of self that causes her to “start thinking like the closest group of animals—like a herd of horses, or a pack [of wolves]. I forget I'm human. I forget I'm me” (1992, 177–178). It is an issue that Shelley Chappell (2007) discusses at length in her exploration of how (a continuous) identity is maintained when one's body undergoes such changes. Exploring this in relation to Daine's shape-shifting, Chappell uses a narration in Pierce's *Wild Magic* in which Daine's mentor, the great mage Numair, erects a magical “glass wall” between Daine's self, envisioned as a “white core” and her

“wild magic,” depicted as “copper fire” (1992, 181). Chappell (2007) argues that this image establishes a core or “essential self” (125) that must somehow remain through such bodily changes. While this essential self is not quite my concern—as I am more interested in the blurring of the inner and outer and its implications for bodily appearance as a marker of self—it does raise an interesting premise regarding how such possible loss of self may be negotiated.

Both Daine’s shape-shifting and Cinder’s cybernetic bodies continue engaging this issue of loss of self through several passages that narrate just how such other things become incorporated into the body image—the body, according to Grosz (1994), “insofar as it is imagined and represented for the subject by the image of others [including its own reflection in a mirror]” (39). While returning to an image is questionable (inasmuch as doing so revisits the images that bombard social and media culture), the body image offered by these texts is an image with a difference: it is an imagined image, a fiction. In popular and media culture, body image is problematic not only because of the particular fiction—perfection—required by the images (mirrors) of that space: airbrushed models and digitally-edited selfies, for example, but also because of the sheer preponderance of those images. However, images are not always contentious, and Grosz’s understanding of body image is useful here because of how it allows “the peculiar, nonorganic connections formed in hysteria and in such phenomena as the phantom limb” (40) to be included within one’s conception of oneself. It is relevant to both Daine and Cinder, but it is the narration of Cinder’s removing a “too-small foot” (2012, 3) from her body that I find most provocative. This narration of Cinder’s removing and replacing her cybernetic foot establishes a difference between the (inorganic) “too-small foot” that has not grown and her (organic) body that has grown.

The screw through Cinder’s ankle had rusted, the engraved cross marks worn to a mangled circle. [...] By the time it was extracted far enough for her to wrench free with her prosthetic steel hand, the hairline threads had been stripped clean. (3)

The foot has become useless because it is too small; as an inorganic thing, it has not grown with the body, and has thus become unfit for its purpose. Yet, it has

not deteriorated in the same way as the screw. The screw is failing. It is “rusted” and “stripped clean.”

However, despite this tension, the foot is still a part of her, and as such, it is constructed as different from other inorganic things. It is this difference that makes the inclusion of some things into the body image (that is to say, one’s sense of self) possible.

Tossing the screwdriver onto the table, Cinder gripped her heel and yanked the foot from its socket. A spark singed her fingertips and she jerked away, leaving the foot to dangle from a tangle of red and yellow wires. (3)

The foot, as well as Cinder’s cybernetic hand, is quite different from the (rusted) screw and the screwdriver that is tossed onto the table, and this difference hinges upon how one group of things has become incorporated into her body image, while the other has not. It is a reading evidenced by the change from the possessive pronoun in “her heel” to the definite article in “the foot.” While attached to the body—via those red and yellow wires—the cybernetic foot is hers, but once removal begins, the possession diminishes. Thus, it is a connection that depends on those wires; it depends on another kind of touch, in that the wires link.

While it could be argued that the foot becomes part of the body because it is human in shape (although—since it is plate metal—it is, for me, humanoid, not human) and the screw does not become part of the body because it does not appear human, the connective function, the touch, of those wires that makes incorporation possible. Cinder’s removal of the “too-small foot” (3) precipitates the connection of a “replacement foot” (12). This connection begins, “She propped her ankle on the opposite knee and began connecting the color-coordinated wires” (15) and is followed by

She tightened the last screw and stretched out her leg, rolling her ankle forward, back, wiggling the toes. It was a little stiff, and the nerve sensors would need a few days to harmonize with the updated wiring. (15)

The screws merely hold the foot in place, whereas the wires—through “harmoniz[ing]” with “the nerve sensors” (15)—make connection possible.

Thus, where this process of removing the “too-small foot” (3) (and replacing it with a “brand-new steel-plated foot” (11)) not only insists upon the juxtaposition between the human, fleshy body and this body’s mechanical body parts, it also illustrates different kinds of connection made possible by Cinder’s being cyborg: that which is only connected; that which is incorporated into the body image (the hand and foot); and that which threatens (“plugging in” (195)). This acknowledgement of what I consider to be a fear of the loss of self is integral to this reading: by acknowledging a potential flaw, these narrations do not seek to replace sight with touch as the means for perceiving the body; doing so would risk merely replacing one dominant means with another. Rather, they show touch and sight working together in order to develop, most particularly, Daine’s and Cinder’s perception of their own (changed) bodies. Thus, touch becomes a provocative means of expanding the self’s perception of itself, that is to say, its body, and in so doing, it—alongside repetition—offers a framework for a relational model of self that counters dominant hegemonic models.

“THE PACK:” A RELATIONAL MODEL OF SELF

Against a backdrop of “girl power,” neoliberal narratives of self, and a sort of “common sense” feminism, Katniss Everdeen—a YA heroine brought to “life” by Jennifer Lawrence in the apocalyptically popular Hunger Games film series and franchise (see, Ross 2012 and Lawrence 2013, 2014, 2015)—appears to be an ideal female self for contemporary culture. She hunts, with considerable skill, becomes the face of a rebellion—and, thus, the embodiment of hope—and she has two young men vying for her affection. Yet, despite appearing to be empowered, Katniss also bears the weight of her world on her slim shoulders. Ironically, she is not alone in this figuring: Bella, Tris, Clary (and many other hegemonic YA heroines) are right there, alongside Katniss, saving the respective day. This is the dominant image of acceptable girlhood in contemporary Western culture: young, fit (in both senses of the word), active and empowered, but while these girls appear to be active and empowered subjective selves, the

model of empowerment they offer is not without cost. Katniss, as well as the others, are empowered at the expense of relationships not only with others but also with themselves.

However, this popular, hegemonic offering of female adolescence is not the only model available to adolescent girls. As I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, Mythopoeic YA fantasy is challenging this dominant ideal by offering alternative images of living and being an adolescent girl. In short, mythopoeic YA fantasy is a sub, or counter, cultural fantasy literature that is rooted in a mythic, world-building mind set, and it does not merely recapitulate the discourses of popular and media culture but, while always in relation to those discourses, it offers alternative images of girlhood. The model of “the Pack” that follows offers a metaphorical model of self that includes interdependency and relation, both of which are refused by hegemonic developmental narratives and liberal humanist narratives of self. Moreover, it does not refuse the body in this figuring rather the body makes it possible.

According to the opening pages of *Wild Magic* (1992), Daine has always had a “knack with animals, but no gift” (15), at least not in the traditional, Tortallan sense. This “knack” not only sets her apart from other humans, but it also lays a foundation upon which her ability to shape-shift, that is, to transform into the shapes of animals, eventually evolves. As I have argued, it is a foundation that establishes oppositions (Gift/wild magic, outside/inside and human/animal) in order to question them. In other words, where the text establishes a (binary) difference between humans and animals, Daine’s shape-shifting—through an expanding of what it means to be Gifted, a blurring of inside/outside and a countering of individuality—holds together those opposing identities. Daine is “of the People” (1992, 70), and this is imperative because it is through the relationships that Daine develops with animals that her shape-shifting offers a relational model of being that counters the individuality of popular and media culture.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Daine’s shape-shifting—especially, the narrations of her pregnancies—also has the distinct advantage of offering a model of self that is “impregnated with otherness” and that demonstrates how “other selves are generated from within the embodied self” (18), a model that Battersby (1998) argues is lacking.

In a provocative narration, Onau, Daine's friend and employer, makes this relationship clear.

The older woman sighed. 'We share this world, Diane. We can't hold apart from each other—humans and animals are meant to be partners. Aren't we, Tahoi?' The dog wagged his tail. He knows. He saved my life, when my husband left me to die. I've saved his life since. He can't cook or sing, and I can't chase rabbits, but we're partners all the same. (266–267)

When she shape-shifts, Daine literally embodies this bond humans and animals already share because "we share this world." Modelling a relationship of self that takes into account the interdependency between not just generations—this is a conversation between Daine and "the older woman," also an issue at play in the conversations between Alanna and Mistress Cooper as well as Kel and her maid—but also humans and animals, this narration is striking in its espousing not just relationship but a relationship between a woman and her dog (see, also, Haraway 2003).¹²¹

This notion of companionship is one that Daine's quartet offers in many forms: Daine is "Hoof-sister," or "hoof-kin," with horses ([1994] 1999, 308); she is "night-sister" to an owl (1992, 134), as she is "wing-sister" to a dragon (260). These relationships suggest kinship, an important web of relations, often between blood relatives but also including those who have entered a family group through marriage.¹²² In Daine's case, her wild magic links her to these animals, producing a relationship of kin. Metaphorically, her magic is the blood of a "blood relation," speaking back to my concern with menstruation as the blood of life in Chapter Four as well as to my concern with connection in these Conclusions.

Poignantly, Daine is also "Pack-sister" (28), and this "Pack" is linked to a

¹²¹ The interdependency between generations is one issue of concern in Holdsworth and Lury (forthcoming, 2016).

¹²² For a cultural materialist approach to kinship patterns, Cultural Anthropology (Harris and Johnson 2006) offers a useful starting point. While not specifically addressed in this thesis, cultural materialism in its concern with material, physical aspects of culture speaks quite strongly to my concern with the body.

sense of community and collectivity that not only problematises the binary opposition between human and animal, but it also demonstrates a sense of cooperation and camaraderie that is absent in the individualism required by neoliberal narratives of choice—and it does so without a loss of self. Moreover, this metaphor of “the Pack” is not restricted to Pierce’s Immortals quartet, as *The Books of Pellinor* (Croggon 2003–2008) also include a notion of “the Pack,” and both these quartets use this image of “the Pack” to establish a metaphorical framework for a relational model of self. In other words, while adolescent girls may not be able to experience “the Pack,” in the same way Daine and Maerad (Croggon’s shero) do through their literal transformations into wolves, “the Pack” does have the potential to serve as a powerful metaphor of interdependency and community that is absent from the discourses of, especially, adolescent development in contemporary Western culture. In this space, Taylor Swift’s “squad,” alongside the impetus behind the popular #squadgoals, speaks to this kind of relationship, while also demonstrating the power of the dominant for recuperating that which might disrupt its norms.

While Daine ultimately learns to transform into any animal (including multiple animals at once) and to incorporate animal parts within and on her human self as well as human parts into her animal self, she shares a particular bond with wolves; Brokefang, the Pack leader of the Longlake wolves, regards her as Pack, despite her looking quite human ([1994] 1999, 3). Daine’s inclusion within the Pack, despite a visible difference between her and a typical Pack member is crucial. It is a key difference between mythopoeic YA fantasy figurings of the Pack and hegemonic offerings. For Daine, appearance does not matter, but for members of Taylor Swift’s “squad,” appearance—and the appearance of the squad as a whole—is paramount. As Petersen (2015) suggests,

It’s simply that the friends Swift chooses to present to the world serve to support crucial, carefully crafted components of Swift’s image. She isn’t coldhearted or utilitarian in her friendship so much as savvy to the ways in which the production of celebrity is, at its heart, utilitarian. (n.p.)

Illustrating a keen sense of neoliberal self-awareness, Swift’s squad is modelled on hegemonic ideals. The image available through the squad is beauty, wealth

and privilege, as the friends include celebrities, musicians and—recently—(popculture) feminists, who serve to craft a particular aspect of Swift’s image (Fillipovic 2015). In other words, Taylor’s squad gives the impression of a relational model of self that eschews dominant narrative threads of individuality, but as it exists within popular culture, this squad is recuperated by the hegemonic, reinforcing my argument that mythopoeic YA fantasy occupies, and that it must, an alternative discursive space.

To this end, Pierce offers a human model of the “pack” in her Circle Universe books, in the partnership wrought between the four ambient mages Sandry (thread mage), Tris (weather mage), Briar (plant mage) and Daja (smith mage). Ambient magic is somewhat akin to Daine’s wildmagic and many parallels between the two can be drawn. While all the texts of this universe are preoccupied, in some way, with the children’s relationship, *The Magic in the Weaving* (1998) is crucial for it sets them upon a particularly bonded path, one that runs counter to hegemonic narratives of individualism.¹²³ Trapped underground by an earthquake and at risk from subsequent tremors, Sandry weaves the children’s magics together in order to make them stronger, “*Fibres by themselves are weak—so are we. Spin them together, and they become strong. I think the spindle will bring our powers together and strengthen us*” (203, formatting original). The metaphor of spinning and weaving is beautiful, as it speaks to how we are “stronger together,” not when in competition.

Competition is symptom of binary systems, and competition plagues both Swift’s squad and #squadgoals. When competition enters the Pack or squad, interdependency, community, and relation fall apart, as competition promotes antagonism, individuality, and distinctiveness. With Swift, the squad is part of a general strategy that was concerned with redeveloping her public persona, after a series of missteps saw her “labelled [as] a serial dater, a ‘maneater’ who was crazy and desperate for a boyfriend” (Woodward 2015,

¹²³ Outside of present scope, this series also speaks to the diversity that is often missing in YA and children’s literature. The children are a “pack,” but they are different: in terms of class (Sandry is a noble, Tris a merchant, Briar an orphan and pickpocket, and Daja a Trader), race (Daja is black), sex (Sandry, Tris and Daja are female and Briar is male) and even sexual orientation (Daja is gay). Here, their differences make them stronger.

n.p). The squad, in this light, becomes a means of refocusing public opinion and increasing Swift's stardom; her individuality, despite the squad.

On a more ordinary level, #squadgoals are competition incarnate: the ambitions of a particular group of friends to dress in a certain style (often that of a particular celebrity), to take fantastic group selfies, or to reach some shared fitness target. The hegemonic nature of the goals and their overwhelming tendency to focus on appearance illustrates the problem with mainstream, hegemonic renderings of the Pack. It is for this reason that the American high school student Laurie Lopez (2016) calls for the ending of the squad in a recent article for *Clover*, Lena Dunham's newsletter aimed at adolescent and teenage girls. Lopez's reasons for disliking squads is because the squad, as figured in American high schools, often becomes a clique—the hegemonic model of the relation that focuses on exclusivity, individuality and competition.

Pierce's Tortall books, however, offer alternatives, and they do so because they are outside of the mainstream of popular and media culture. For these texts, "the Pack" means kinship, support and relation: "You're my pack, aren't you? I'll do my best. I can't promise they'll listen to me, but I'll try" ([1994] 1999, 14)," and "It's so lonely outside the pack" (1992, 161, ellipses original). While Maerad's ability differs from Daine's, the idea of "Pack" offered by her "being wolf" is similar to that constructed by Daine's texts: Maerad "*can share our kill and drink our water*, he said. *We will give her the protection of the pack*" (Croggon [2004] 2005, 435 emphasis original). Here, the pack is about "shar[ing]" and "protection." For Daine, this community is demonstrated in a need for companionship: "he's a good pack leader for you. Brokefang went on. Humans are like wolves. We all need a pack" ([1994] 1999, 93). Brokefang's statement not only demonstrates an importance of the Pack, but it also establishes a further similarity between humans and wolves, at least concerning this need for a Pack—humans are *like* wolves in this need.

Daine and Maerad find care, companionship, and unity in "the Pack," just as Alanna and Kel find support and understanding in their conversations with other women. These are relational models of self, and they are crucial for undoing the dominance of binary oppositions. As repetition and connection demonstrate, relationship frustrates economies of opposition by occupying the

space between oppositions, and as this final reading of “the Pack” demonstrates, the relational model of self available in these texts also refuses the competition and isolating individuality implicit in hegemonic narratives of self (narratives underscored by the system of binary oppositions). Moreover, as mainstream offerings of “the Pack” demonstrate, the power of the dominant to recuperate, to stabilise, that which threatens its systems is strong. Thus, these texts also demonstrate how challenges to this narrative must come from the periphery, from, for example, mythopoeic YA fantasy, as this fantasy is both outside of mainstream, popular culture and in-between the binary opposition children/adult literature.

* * *

These mythopoeic YA fantasy texts do insist upon a certain “truth” of the body; there are certain immutable facts: Alanna is female and her body will physically develop into a woman; Levana’s body is scarred; Daine’s body is human; Cinder’s body is part-human and part-machine. Yet, these texts also complicate that truth: cross-dressing disguises Alanna’s body, as the Lunar glamour does for Levana and Cinder; pregnancy both reveals and conceals a multiplicity of body, while Daine’s body can also become wolf or bird or a myriad of People (animals within this world). In other words, these texts demonstrate, exceedingly well, the body’s liminality, and in so doing, they refuse the flatness and superficiality of body, and bodily appearance, demanded by popular and media culture. Becoming bodily a girl, animal, human-machine hybrid or being scarred or pregnant does not foreclose opportunity or the “positions available for occupation,” to return to Parsons (2004). Rather, this “becoming” or “being” offers a topography of the body that does not refuse lumps, bumps and difference and a concomitant model of self founded in relation, not opposition.

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